

# An Assessment of Inclusive Education In Bangladesh



The recommendations contained in this report are guided by the belief:  
**"All for the children for all the children".**

**This study was financially supported by Japan Fund in Trust (JFIT)**

# **AN ASSESSMENT OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN BANGLADESH**

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This study was conducted with financial support of the Japan Fund in Trust.

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## FOREWORD

Inclusive education is concerned with providing appropriate responses to the broad spectrum of learning needs in formal and non-formal educational settings. Rather than being a marginal theme, inclusive education is an approach that looks into how to transform education systems in order to respond to the diversity of learners. It aims to enable both teachers and learners to feel comfortable with diversity and to see it as a challenge and enrichment in the learning environment, rather than a problem.

Quality has been a major issue in primary education in Bangladesh. Gross enrolment ratio in primary education reached 97 % in 2002 and NER is estimated at 86 %. Though the country has achieved high enrolment ratios and gender parity, it requires further effort in improving other important aspects, such as retention, completion, and plurality of learning. The country has implemented the sub-sector wide approach programme, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP II) is focusing on improving the quality of primary education. It is encouraging that inclusive education is considered as an important component in the programme.

While inclusive education has been more often addressed with issues on ethnic minority, disabilities, marginalized groups, and poverty, it is also a fundamental factor to achieve quality education ensuring excellence for all, which is one of six goals in Education for All. As mentioned above, embracing the diversity of each learner is its core concept which is essential to ensure access for those excluded from education as well as to develop the potential and talent of every learner.

This study was commissioned to assess the present situation of inclusive education in the country. The study also focuses on reviewing existing educational policies and child right status as relevant to inclusive education and identifies barriers and opportunities within the existing primary education sector.

We would like to express our thanks to all who collaborated in conducting this study and to the Government of Japan, which financially supported this study through the Japan Fund in Trust scheme. We hope it will be instrumental in supporting efforts to promote inclusive education in Bangladesh, specifically for the implementation of PEDP II. We believe that inclusive education is one of most effective approaches in achieving Education for All.



Wolfgang Vollmann  
Country Director  
UNESCO Dhaka Office

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The consultants are extremely grateful for the unstinted support received from everyone during this study. The researchers could not have gained the required insights and understanding without the rich discussions, for which so many people gave their time so willingly and considerately. We express our deepest thanks to all the officials in the various Ministries, National Curriculum Textbook Board members and the Donor agencies for sharing their valuable views. The researchers also take this opportunity to convey their special gratitude to all the staff members of the various schools/ institutions for permitting us to observe their daily teaching activities and discussing the issues of common concern, in spite of the fact that all of them had more than enough on their hands. The frank views expressed by teachers, head teachers, members of the school management committees, parents and other community members and above all the children themselves proved to be invaluable learnings. The analysis of the expressed opinions made it possible to identify the existing barriers and gauge the existing strengths and opportunities, which could be utilized. We also sincerely wish to put on record our gratefulness to the IE Core group members for their support throughout the study. Their planning meetings helped in preparing the visit schedule and delineating the focus of the study. They also made available background reading material to the consultants. A special thanks to Ms Els Heijnen for her time, attention and valuable inputs provided untiringly through out the study.

Many colleagues and members of the IE Core group went through the draft and gave their valuable comments. The consultants wish to thank them all. In addition the researchers would like to thank the UNESCO staff and in particular Mr.Olof Sandkull from UNESCO Bangkok Office, Mr. Md. Golam-Kibria and Mr. Ichiro Miyazawa from the UNESCO Dhaka office for their earnest efforts and support from the beginning to the completion stage of this assignment. Ms. Deepa Jain a freelance consultant acted as a valuable sounding board at different stages of the study and deserves special thanks.

It is sincerely hoped that this document, which has been produced with UNESCO support, will be useful in taking the agenda of inclusive education forward in Bangladesh.

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## **ACRONYMS**

<b>AGP</b>	<b>Adolescent Girls' Program</b>
<b>ALCP</b>	<b>Active Learning Community Programme</b>
<b>BBS</b>	<b>Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics</b>
<b>BIAM</b>	<b>Bangladesh Institute of Administration and Management</b>
<b>BPF</b>	<b>Bangladesh Protibondhi Foundation</b>
<b>BRAC</b>	<b>Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee</b>
<b>BSS</b>	<b>Basic School System</b>
<b>CARE</b>	<b>Cooperation for American Relief Everywhere</b>
<b>CDD</b>	<b>Centre for Disability in Development</b>
<b>C-EMIS</b>	<b>Community Based Education Management Information System</b>
<b>CEP</b>	<b>Child Education Programme</b>
<b>CHOSEN</b>	<b>Children's Opportunities for Learning Enhanced</b>
<b>CHT</b>	<b>Chittagong Hill Tract</b>
<b>CHTDP</b>	<b>Chittagong Hill Tract Development Program</b>
<b>CLAP</b>	<b>Community Learning Assistance Program</b>
<b>CMES</b>	<b>Centre for Mass Education in Science</b>
<b>CRC</b>	<b>Convention on the Rights of the Child</b>
<b>CRD</b>	<b>Convention on the Rights of the Child</b>
<b>CSID</b>	<b>Centre for Services and Information on Disability</b>
<b>DAM</b>	<b>Dhaka Ahsania Mission</b>
<b>DFID</b>	<b>Department for International Development</b>
<b>DNFE</b>	<b>Department of Non-formal Education</b>
<b>DPE</b>	<b>Directorate of Primary Education</b>
<b>EFA</b>	<b>Education For All</b>
<b>ELCG</b>	<b>Education Local Consultative Group</b>
<b>EMIS</b>	<b>Education Management Information System</b>
<b>EPAI</b>	<b>Extended Programme for Immunization</b>
<b>ESTEEM</b>	<b>Effective School Through Enhanced Education Management</b>
<b>FIVDB</b>	<b>Friends In Village Development Bangladesh</b>
<b>GOB</b>	<b>Government of Bangladesh</b>

GPS	Government Primary School
GUC	Grambangla Unneyon Committee
HIV	Human Immuno Virus
ICDP	Integrated Community Development Project
IDEAL	Intensive District Approaches to Education for All
IE	Inclusive Education
MoPME	Ministry of Primary Mass Education
MWTL	Multiple Ways of Teaching Learning
NAPE	National Academy for Primary Education
NCTB	National Curriculum and Textbook Board
NEP	National Education Policy
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NPA	National Plan of Action
PDR	People's Democratic Republic
PEDP	Primary Education Development Program
PSQL	Primary School Quality Level
PTIs	Primary Training Institute
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SEHD	Society for Environment and Development
SLIP	School Learning Improvement Plans
SMC	School Management Committee
SSC	Secondary School Certificate
UCEP	Under Privileged Children's Education Program
UCLC	Urban Community Learning Centres
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nation Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
URC	Upazila Resource Centre

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

UNESCO Bangladesh commissioned a consultant team for an objective assessment of the present situation of inclusive education in the country. The study focused on assessing educational policies and practices in the context of inclusion, identifying barriers to access and participation and opportunities available within the primary education sector for developing inclusive practice. Participatory methodologies were the key tool for collecting information and obtaining views of children (from marginalised groups and others) parents, teachers, community members, policy makers and grass root level workers. The assessment was done based on an extensive review of existing literature, field observations and discussions with relevant policy makers, implementers, researchers, and NGO representatives. The diagnostic findings of the study were shared, discussed and validated in the two day National Seminar on Inclusive Education (IE) organised by IE Core Group and lead by UNESCO. The present report has been prepared based on diagnostic findings and deliberations in the National Seminar.

Bangladesh has endorsed the goals and strategies as set out in the World Education Forum, ratified the Convention of the Rights of the Child and signed other international agreements linked to inclusive / responsive quality EFA. The priority given to children is seen in the Constitutional provisions, individual legal enactments, educational policies and programmes for children. Concrete action is seen in terms of setting up of a separate Primary and Mass Education Division. However, pro-children provisions are not adequately implemented owing to insufficient infrastructural facilities lack of motivation and the callous attitude of the enforcing agencies. The mainstream school system is not well equipped to meet the varied needs of all learners. The Government and NGOs have made some progress, but the benefits have not reached all marginalised sections uniformly. The exclusion has often been social, economic, ethnic and linguistic base. The major groups that have benefited are girls and children from the poor. However cultural and social deprivation especially for the former group continues to be a major barrier.

Though theoretically schools are open for all children, groups remaining ignored are children from the ethnic and linguistic (do not speak Bangla) minorities, children of 'bede' (boat gypsies), street children, children with severe social stigma (e.g. sex-workers' children, children from sweeper community), working children, domestic helpers, and physical and intellectually challenged children. However the assessment was limited by its coverage of institutions/ programs focusing on these groups, while there are other marginalised groups like children having HIV, children affected by conflict or natural calamities like cyclones and many more who need attention. Their exclusion from education does not seem visible to many, and the theme is neither a popular issue, nor does it seem to be a priority in the general scheme of things.

The aims, design and implementation plan of PEDP II can provide the required impetus to inclusive educational practice. IE has been incorporated in the PEDP II. An attempt has been made to tabulate observations along with the features of the proposed activities of PEDP II, which can promote inclusive education.

To ascertain the ground level situation the team visited several NGO run schools/ programmes and three Government primary schools, which are making efforts in the direction of inclusive education. These visits to all schools are documented; along with interaction with the stakeholders and major issues/questions are articulated at the end each documented school visit.

## Major Findings

- ❖ The findings with respect to ***overall issues*** are given below:
  - Inclusive education as a policy, concept and practice is at a nascent stage of development in Bangladesh.
  - There are large gaps between theory and practice, and the country faces a challenge with the actual implementation of IE.
  - The National policies have not adopted inclusive education and the recent Policy does not include any guidelines to either address or facilitate inclusive education.
  - Theoretically schools are open to ‘all children’ but in practice many children continue to remain excluded/ discriminated
  - The needs of the marginalised groups (like Hill tribes) vary and are based on remote and difficult locations with different styles of livelihood. The limited sensitivity and non-recognition of their linguistic and cultural needs and often outright negative attitudes and discriminations in mainstream society are also reflected in education.
  - The teaching style in the schools visited varied from a total emphasis on rote learning to active involvement of the learners in a few schools. Textbooks are often times the only reading material and there was a general dearth of teaching learning material in the classrooms.
  - There seems to be lack of coordination and linkages among the relevant ministries on issues related to the education of marginalised groups.
  - The most urgent need is to prepare teachers and administrators to work with all children in the mainstream system and training must be planned systematically on a short term and long-term basis with proper follow up support.
  - The impact of the vacancy situation on the quality of primary education in Bangladesh is glaring.
- ❖ The findings on the basis of ***interaction*** with all ***essential groups/institutions to be involved to make IE a reality*** are:
  - More attention needs to be given to the development of the marginalised groups both by the Government and NGO sector (prevalent view of marginalized children).
  - The social stigma causes almost total exclusion of the children from the mainstream schools and education needs to be complemented for some groups by supportive interventions such as shelter, protection and health (prevalent view of street children).
  - All the stakeholders (marginalised group) were unanimous in their view that education and rehabilitation need to be planned on an urgent basis.

- The implementers of IE projects were of the opinion that there is valuable learning to be drawn on as regards promoting inclusive practice.
- The discussion with members of the NCTB revealed that they could take only those initiatives, which are sanctioned and asked for by the higher policy making bodies.
- ❖ Major findings on the basis of *observation* during the field visit are:
  - Children are not in school because of reasons other than poverty. The traditional system of education tends to increase the gap between advantaged ‘included’ children and disadvantaged excluded groups. A rigid adherence to inflexible curricula and methodologies make school good learning places only for a few children.
  - Attitudinal barriers were seen at all levels- policy makers, to implementers to users. Planners and policy makers agreed that the situation at the ground level was far from supporting inclusive practice because of barriers related to practicalities of practice.
  - The representatives of the international donor organizations and the relevant UN organizations were of the opinion that, the ‘why’ of inclusion is clear but the ‘how of inclusive practice’ is difficult to address and that is where the challenge lies.
  - Currently, only a very small fraction of the children with disabilities are being educated either under the special education schemes or in some NGO run schools.
  - The children of the minority group are mostly alienated from the education system. Social stigma attached with profession and hidden identity in case of the children of Bede and hereditarily sweeper communities and sex workers play major role in their educational exclusion

The *major recommendations* that emerge out on the basis of the findings for:

- ❖ The **planners** are:
  - Need for developing a clear understanding of IE and political will
  - Identifying the existing myths associated with IE practice and plan initiatives to gradually change opinion and attitudes.
  - Providing for access for all (which imply changes in planning and implementation processes and financial allocations)
  - Need for making some physical changes in schools (e.g. an entrance ramp), material inputs (e.g. materials for multi-level teaching)
  - Re-organizing the present education administration, and monitoring that goes beyond scorecards and classrooms and into the community.
  - Realizing that providing some incentives (both material and non material) to the most vulnerable groups for short duration of time can enhance inclusion.
  - Attempt should be made to collect reliable data on the magnitude and educational status of children with disabilities and the disparities between regions and types of disabilities.
  - Concerted efforts to bring about the required changes in policy and legal provisions to support inclusion and put them in practice.

- Budgetary allocations for promoting the education of all children need to take into account the backlog created as a result of long neglect of the children from marginalised community.
- ❖ The **implementers** are:
  - Initiating change in favour of inclusive education involves mobilizing opinion, and building consensus.
  - Inclusion is not just about including the excluded within the classroom but also about allowing full participation and ensuring inclusive responsive quality education for all students.
  - The IE Core group should act as a technical partner of PEDP II for focusing on promoting inclusiveness in the quality components of the programme.
  - Effort should be made to encourage parents of marginalized children to enroll the children in mainstream school by seeking the support of the community and teachers.
  - Proper registration of birth and deaths by local government in order to plan realistically for all children.
  - Meaningful partnerships should be promoted to move towards education as a fundamental right of every child.
  - A ‘whole school’ approach to school improvement is more effective in establishing change in schools, than training a few of the staff. Teachers should be allowed to use innovative teaching skills
  - The NCTB should take the necessary steps in order to ensure that curriculum developers and all subject teachers engaged in the revision of textbooks are aware of IE concept and practice. Development of supplementary books in the ethnic language using Bangla script will be helpful.
  - Improved teacher training is a must. It should result in the creation of teaching-learning environments that are both welcoming and responsive to learning of all children.
  - Organize study visits to other low resource countries in Asia and learn from their successful experiences with inclusive education.
  - Involve the print and electronic media to initiate a public debate and build opinion in favor of inclusive education.
  - The educational interventions of groups such as the street children need to go together with other interventions touching the overall life such as shelter and physical and psychological security, skill training etc.
  - Education authorities should recognize the challenges of the schools with children from the Bede, hereditarily sweeper communities and sex workers and provide appropriate supportive measures.
  - Early childhood care and basic education should be made available for very young children especially of sex-workers.

# **CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND**



## CHAPTER 1 : BACKGROUND

### 1.1 Focus of Study

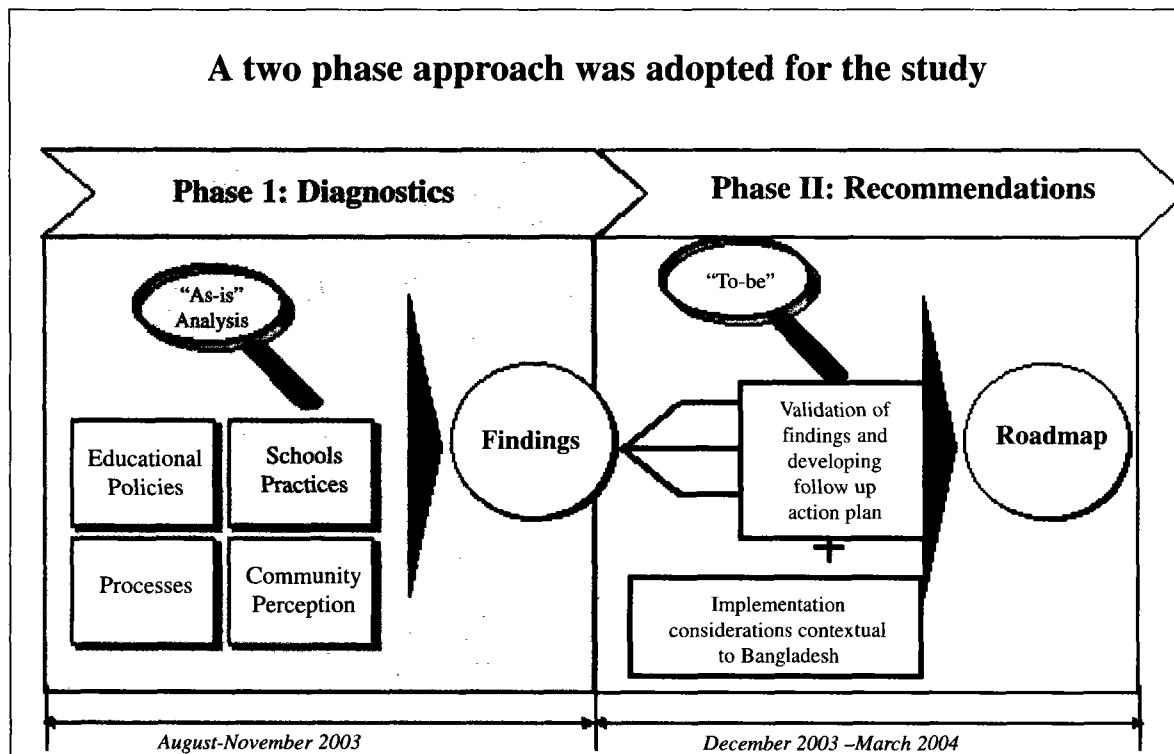
UNESCO Bangladesh commissioned a consultant team (consisting of an international and a national expert) for an objective assessment of the present situation of inclusive education in the country. The study focused on:

- Assessment of the prevailing status of IE in Bangladesh
- Reviewing existing educational policies and child right status as relevant to inclusive education
- Identifying barriers and opportunities to access and participation within the existing primary education sector

### 1.2 Methodology

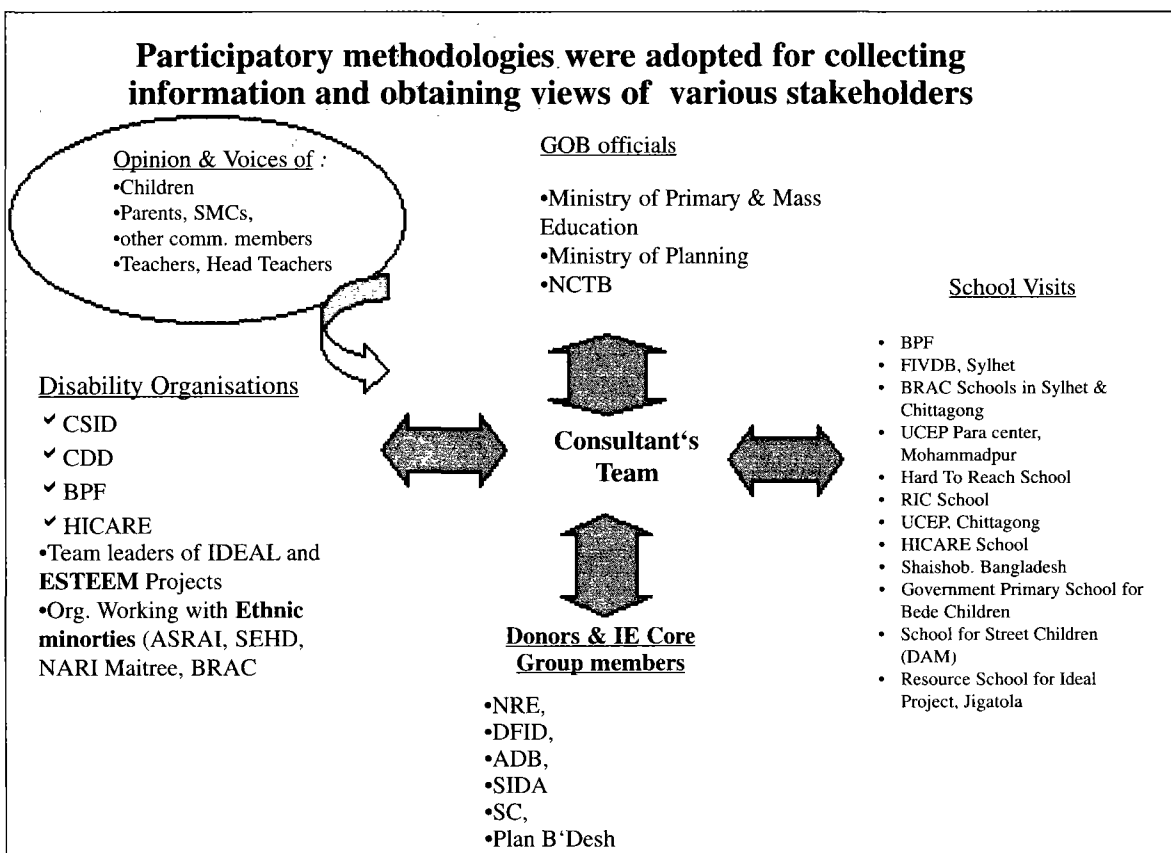
A two-phase approach was adopted for carrying out the study. In the first phase, an 'as is analysis' of the status of Inclusive Education in Bangladesh was carried out on the following four dimensions:

Educational policies,  
School practices,  
Processes and  
Community perception



This assessment was done based on an extensive review of existing literature, field observations and discussions with relevant policy makers, implementers, researchers, and NGO representatives. The list of Institutions visited/persons met is attached as Appendix 1.

Participatory methodologies were adopted for collecting information and obtaining views of children (from marginalized groups and others), parents, teachers, community member, policy makers and grass root level workers.



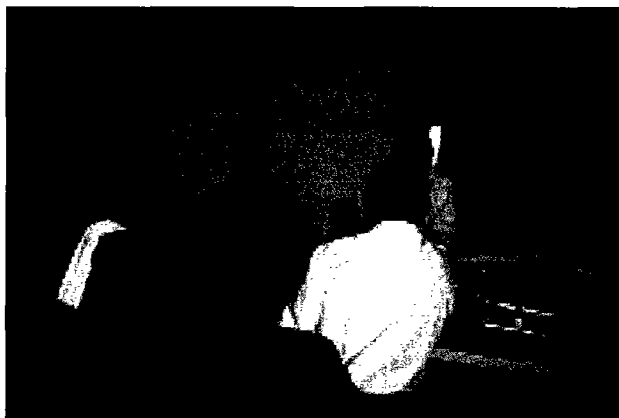
The main limitations of the study were that children from some marginalised groups like children affected by HIV, children affected by conflict or natural calamities, children from fishing community living in coastal areas, child victims of trafficking, refugee children, child victims of drug addiction and others could not be covered. The field visits were limited to the geographical regions of Dhaka City, Savar, Sylhet, and Chittagong.

The diagnostic findings of the study were shared, discussed and validated in the two day National Seminar on Inclusive Education organised by IE Core Group<sup>1</sup> and lead by UNESCO held in Dhaka at BIAM, on 1 and 2



<sup>1</sup> IE Core Group consists of UNESCO, MoPME, Save the Children, UNICEF, UCEP, BPF, BRAC

December 2003. The participants at the Seminar came from various ministries and other national organisations of the Government of Bangladesh, non governmental organisations from different parts of the country, and from international donor agencies (including ELCG members). Government officials from Laos PDR and IE coordinator for Central Asia (Krygystan) Save the Children were also invited and made presentations about their experiences in developing and implementing IE by their respective national governments as part of their commitments to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and Education for All (EFA). These exchanges and the presentation of the research findings helped in generating a rich discussion on the current status of IE in Bangladesh. The participants reflected upon possible options of implementing IE in contexts of meager resources and limited policy guidelines.



The present report has been prepared based on literature review, inputs received during field visits and deliberations in the National Seminar.

## **CHAPTER 2: INCLUSIVE EDUCATION- THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

## CHAPTER 2 : INCLUSIVE EDUCATION-THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Inclusive education (IE) takes the agenda of Education for All forward. It is about building a more just society and ensuring the right to education of all learners regardless of their individual characteristics or difficulties. This means that IE initiatives have a particular focus on those groups that have traditionally been excluded from education opportunities so far. This can only happen if ordinary schools become more inclusive or in other words they become more capable of educating ALL children in their communities.

The barriers, which many different groups encounter, cannot be overcome simply by developing separate systems and schools for them. The education system has to become responsive to diversity. Local community schools need to be for everyone and no child should be excluded. Meeting one child's needs at the expense of the other cannot be a way forward.

Inclusive practice varies from context to context and is closely linked to the possibilities and challenges within the education system and the community, and to the various barriers associated with the teaching and learning processes.

Inclusion is not only about philosophy but more importantly about the practical changes that must be brought about in order to help the children with special needs and all other children in our school systems to excel and unfold their potential. The shift and the changes will not merely benefit the children we often single out and label as "children with special needs" but all children, all teachers all parents, and all headmasters. Effective teaching research has shown that good teaching is good teaching for all children irrespective of individual differences, and that improved teacher training and on-going professional teacher support may be one of the most important strategies to improve quality education for all.

### For more information on IE see:

*"Inclusive Education: is a right of all children"* - a pamphlet, developed by Save the Children Bangladesh", (Appendix 2), Basic Principles for Promoting Education For All (Appendix 3)

Highlights of IE Consultative meeting/ Workshop July 2001 (Appendix 4),

### Suggested Reading:

Planning for Education For All (EFA) is planning for Inclusive education by Els Heijnen.

### What is "Inclusive"?

- Including ALL children who are left out or excluded from school:
- children with disability;
- children who do not speak the language of the classroom;
- children who are at risk of dropping out because they are sick, hungry, or not achieving well;
- girls and boys who should be in school but are not, (e.g. children who work at home, in the fields or who have paying jobs to help their families survive) and
- children who may be enrolled in school but may feel excluded from learning in the classroom (e.g. the ones who sit at the back of the room, and who may soon leave the classroom altogether (dropout) because they are not from the same community

We are responsible for creating a learning environment where ALL children can learn and feel included in the learning community within and outside our classrooms and schools.

### Developing Inclusive Education

An inclusive school is not simply one, which educates children with disabilities; rather inclusive education is about reducing all barriers to learning and developing ordinary schools, which are capable of meeting the needs of all learners. The development of an IE system means that we have to change the focus of our work so that we can support children in their ordinary schools and maintain them in the communities.

### Working definition of IE adopted in the Consultative Workshop on IE in Bangladesh, 2001

*IE is an approach to improve the education system by limiting and removing barriers to learning and acknowledging individual children's needs and potential. The goal of this approach is to make a significant impact on the educational opportunities of those: who attend school but who for different reasons do not achieve adequately and those who are not attending school but who could attend if families communities, schools and education systems were more responsive to their requirements.*

# **CHAPTER 3: NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS: THE CONTEXT**

## CHAPTER 3 : NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS RELATED TO CHILDREN

### 3.1 International Commitments

#### 3.1.1 EFA: Dakar Framework

Bangladesh has endorsed the goals and strategies as set out in the World Education Forum, Dakar, 2000 wherein a commitment was made to the achievement of Education for all (EFA) goals and targets for every citizen and for every society. There are other international agreements linked to inclusive / responsive quality EFA ratified by Government of Bangladesh (Refer to Appendix 5 for a brief summary of international commitments that can be linked to inclusive / responsive quality of EFA).

#### International agreements

- The Salamanca Declaration (1994) emphasizes:  
“the regular classroom is the best place to safeguard the right of education for children with special educational needs”
- Dakar Framework for Action (2000), mentions:  
“...in order to attract and retain children from marginalized and excluded groups, education systems should respond flexibly. Education systems must be inclusive, actively seeking out children who are enrolled and responding in a flexible way to the circumstances and needs of all learners.”
- The E-9 Declaration (2000) also highlights the goal:  
“all children with special needs will be integrated in mainstream schools.”
- The Right to quality education - key component of CRC and several other international agreements - Affirmed by all South Asian countries

#### 3.1.2 Bangladesh and CRC

Bangladesh ratified and therefore affirmed its support to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). A review of literature indicates that this was done practically without initiating any awareness building, discussion or debate on the CRC in the country. What was the compulsion? Was it to portray the country in a better light internationally, seek more funding, or shift the focus on children's issues away from the national front?

The UN General Assembly approved the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1998. It is distinguished by the fact that it emphasizes a positive and optimistic image of children. The CRC creates a legitimate claim for all children to benefit from an equal share in the states resources and transforms parental powers into parental responsibilities. It encourages international collaboration with a common framework of obligations and lays down minimum standards against which to test laws, policy and practices as they effect not a few but “all” children. The CRC provides a monitoring mechanism, which ensures that governments can be held accountable for their measures, and provides NGO's and others in challenging existing claims.

Since the ratifying of the CRC, however recently the GOB has produced a number of documents relating to children, such as the National Programme of Action for Achieving Goals for the Children and Development for the 1990s, a Decade Plan of Action for the Girl Child, both adopted in 1992, and the National Children Policy enunciated in 1994 (incorporating the CRC, WSC and SAARC goals and strategies). Refer to Appendix-6 for brief details on National commitments that can be linked to inclusive/responsive quality EFA

Despite ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child many children are denied the right to education because of socio-economic conditions, religion, sex, language, disability etc. There is a need to take serious steps in implementing the CRC mandate and promote inclusive practice through a collective action and move beyond organizing seminars with limited participation and preparing documents.

## **3.2 National Provisions**

The priority given to children is seen in the Constitutional provisions, individual legal enactments, educational policies and programmes for children in Bangladesh. The section below discusses these national provisions.

### ***3.2.1 Constitutional provisions***

The Constitutional provisions relevant for Children's Rights include the Directive Principles of State Policy, Articles 15, 17, and 25 (1) and Fundamental Rights, Articles 27, 28 (1), 28 (2), 28 (3), 28 (4), 31, 32, 39 (1) and 39 (2). The general principles regarding the protection of children and others from all forms of discrimination in particular are included in Articles 27, 28 and 31 of the Constitution. Refer to Appendix 7 for details.

The Constitution of Bangladesh deals with education in legally non-enforceable directive principles rather than in the chapters on fundamental rights that can be enforced. However, through judicial activism, it is possible to expand the interpretation of the legally enforceable fundamental "right to life" provision in the Constitution, and thereby provide primary education policies, and more importantly, allocation of resources for primary education to meet the existing needs of the children especially those from the minority groups.

### ***3.2.2 Legal Acts affecting status of children***

As stated earlier there are separate legal enactments related to children. The section below highlights the legal provisions related to education and protection of children with specific reference to child labour, women and girls, child marriage, ethnic minorities and children in situations of emergency, criminal responsibility, health and nutrition and those related to defining the age of the child. The details as regards the specific legal acts and salient issues are tabulated in Appendix 8

#### ***3.2.2.1 Primary Education Compulsory Act***

Under the Primary Education Compulsory Act of 1991(refer Appendix 8), education has been made compulsory for children aged 6 to 10 and consequently, in recent years, additional resources have been mobilized for primary education by both government and the NGOs. Concrete action is seen in terms of setting up of a separate Primary and Mass Education Division. However, in terms of both coverage and quality, a long way remains to be negotiated. Also the "compulsion" aspect has not as yet been well publicized let alone implemented.

Questions arise also as regards the age range specified under the Act. Why make education compulsory for only children between ages 6-10 years? This has special significance when considering the needs of the marginalized groups, the high rate of dropout and the quality of education being provided. Have we fulfilled our commitment by providing for just four years of compulsory education? Can four years of education provide enough skills and prepare children for life?

### ***3.2.3 Laws Concerning the Protection of Children***

#### ***3.2.3.1 Child Labour***

Despite Constitutional provisions and various enactments including the Children Act, which are supposed to protect children from abuse and neglect, child labour and other forms of abuse



remain a vicious form of exploitation in Bangladesh. Child labour is inextricably linked with the right of children to education. Child labour works against child education, and where children's education is strongly organized, child labour is seen to be significantly reduced (Weiner, 1991, Delap, 1998 and Boyden et al, 1998).

Qualitative and quantitative data on child labour, in general and in the informal sector, in particular, is very limited and is for the most part unreliable, despite the increased research in this field during the last one decade. Added problems in this regard are those relating to the definition of child labour and willful under-reporting by guardians and employers in response to legal restrictions on employing children (Basu, 1999a).

In practice the situation is quite alarming particularly because of lack of enforcement. Physical abuse while doing different kinds of hazardous labour, and violence by law-enforcement officials, particularly towards street children (both boys and girls) is often reported. According to the 1995 BBS national sample survey, in the urban areas, there are 301 economic activities in which children are involved and among these 27 are considered as most harmful to children; (Khanam, M.2000).

According to Myron Weiner (1996), it seems to us that a number of factors such as poverty, lack of sufficient educational facilities, traditional values, machinations of vested interest groups, ignorance, lack of social awareness, migration, parental separation, death/ disability of earning member in the family, social injustice, crime, natural calamities, etc. have all combined to produce the extraordinarily high magnitude of child labour in Bangladesh, and given the lack of capacity and commitment at both policy and implementation levels, it is not surprising that the laws in place against child labour are hardly being implemented.

Instead of an outright ban on all child labour, the more appropriate policy package in this regard, at least for the time being, could consist of (a) regulating the hours and conditions of work; (b) legally banning specifically hazardous and undesirable types of child labour (c) combining education with work; and (d) punitive measures not against a particular product/ sector but of a generalized nature, in case of violation of an agreed-upon international child labour standard ( Basu, 1999b)

### 3.2.3.2 *Child Abuse*

There exist legal provisions (See Appendix 8) protecting children against abuse , but the situation on the ground shows that an increasing number of them (particularly girls) are becoming victims of various forms of sexual exploitation and abuse, including prostitution and rape. According to an estimate, about half a million children are victims of sexual abuse (Raha M. 1997).

In spite of the existing laws the fact remains that an increasing number of children (perhaps more girl children) from the poorest families of Bangladesh are being continuously transferred to India, Pakistan and the Middle-East for prostitution, slave labor, camel riding, organ transfers, etc. Organized gangs with backing from powerful people are engaged in these inhuman activities. Despite popular outcry and occasional police raids, there seems to be no end to such trafficking across the borders.<sup>2</sup>

Sometimes, street children are exploited also by the political parties for their own interest (Khananm, M. 2000). Review of literature indicates that the victims of certain gross physical and sexual abuses, such as torture, rape, and dowry related violence and acid throwing are almost exclusively girls.

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<sup>2</sup> Siddiqui KU 2001: Better Days Better Lives, UPL, Dhaka

There is nothing in the laws against the use of children as agricultural and construction workers, although some of these may be even more hazardous than factory work (hazardous child labor being labor that is detrimental to a child's normal physical and mental development).

### 3.2.3.3 Physical Punishment

Severe punishment at home and school particularly in Madrasas is often inflicted on young children by parents, guardians and teachers not only to secure better academic performance but also to enforce obedience (Kabir, AHM, 1999.) This practice is amplified by the traditional view in the Bangladesh society that parents, guardians, teachers and elders "can do no wrong" and children ought to be beaten if they are not obedient.

*"I do not like to go to school as I am often beaten for not doing my work well and losing my things . My teacher keeps a long stick in his hand and uses it both to point things on the blackboard and also hit us. It really hurts badly when he uses it on my knuckles."*

**Childs voice**

### 3.2.3.4 Child and Criminal Responsibility

The age of criminal responsibility in Bangladesh is one of the lowest in the world. Though the international standards recommend that the age be based on emotional, mental and intellectual maturity and that it should not be fixed too low, legally children are punished for committing an offence if they are over seven years of age.

The law provides that "no child can be removed from parents against their will". Legally a child offender is permitted to reside with the mother in jail up to 4-6 years. Despite the law due to acute poverty, separation, divorce, cruelty, etc. there are a large number of abandoned, neglected street children and orphans in the country. Actually, many "orphans" are not really orphans and some orphanages keep parents away from their children. Domestic child servants are also kept away from their families and often have no choice in the decision to send them to serve as domestic help. Although, over the years, there has been continuous reporting in the print media on cruelty to, and torture of, child domestic servants, the situation on the ground has not improved significantly. As example see Appendix 9.

The Children Act 1974, the Bangladesh Penal Code and other laws and ordinances have adequate provisions for safeguarding the interests of children, subjected to torture and violence. Even parents and guardians are not exempt from the offence of cruelty to children. However, strangely the Children Act of 1974 does not protect a male child from the sentence of whipping. The mere fact that the law still allows whipping and encourages the use of physical violence against children instead of seeking other humane ways of guiding them into a more positive behavior is disturbing.

Pro-children provisions are not at all adequately implemented owing to insufficient infrastructural facilities lack of motivation and the callous attitude of the enforcing agencies. For example, many children languish in jails, whereas under the law they are supposed to be in special custody as juvenile offenders. Next to poverty, the most important obstacle that needs to be addressed is the attitudinal problem. Indeed, one possible reason why there are no laws against child labour in the agricultural and construction sectors is that there is a general permissive approach to parental exploitation of a child's labour, and an implicit recognition that children have a duty to maintain and support parents. The Compulsory Primary Education Act now provides a legal basis for action against such "societal norms." Unfortunately, such laws have hardly been publicized, let alone implemented.

### 3.2.3.5 Housing Shelter , Sanitation and Protection of Privacy

The Bangladesh Constitution refers to the right to shelter and sanitation. Although it is not particularly focused on children, it provides the basis for an affirmative policy framework and actions for realizing the child's right to shelter and sanitation.

The constitutional as well as legal enactments (See Appendix 7 and 8 for details) also provide children the right to protection and privacy. However, in a situation of poverty, this cannot be implemented for either children or adults. For example, the extremely scarce and deplorable housing conditions under which the poor live hardly allow any privacy.

## 3.2.4 Laws Concerning Girls And Women

### 3.2.4.1 Child Marriage

Kabir, S (1999) argues, child marriage and the prevailing attitude towards the role of women in the family and society continue to be the two major reasons for the female child's lagging behind in education.

The legal provision against child marriage has an internal contradiction as though it prescribes punishment for parents or guardians of minors getting married, it does not declare such marriage as void. It is also at variance with the Muslim traditional law on the age of puberty (which is lower than that in the 1929 Act, See Appendix 8).

*"Girls are usually easily persuaded to marry at an earlier age because of the prevailing norms and what she is told and sees since her birth. In villages unmarried girls are a source of shame and insecurity to parents. The best protection for a girl is the husband and the earlier she leaves her parent's house the better for the family. The proper place of the girls is within the household, and they should be married off once they become physically mature."*

SMC Member

Under the marriage laws, a girl has to be at least 18 years old and a boy 21, in order to marry. In most circumstances, neither the girl nor her parents are aware of the provisions of the law and when necessary it is the girl who is forced to marry against her will. The law has proved to be highly ineffective at the implementations level. There is poor awareness of the laws and they are also often misinterpreted and misused by the enforcing authorities. The traditional attitude towards the female child's marriage acts as a big hurdle against the legal position.

The statistics point to child marriage being on the decline in the country as a whole. This undesirable practice of child marriage is known to have harmful implications for the girl child's well-being, education and health. Moreover, the deteriorating law and order situation and increasing violence against women in the country also reinforced it in recent times.

### 3.2.4.2 Family Support and Discrimination against women

There are now many households headed by women in both urban and rural areas of Bangladesh. It is seen that husbands, particularly among the poor, abandon an alarming number of women along with their children.

It is important that a child be identified by the name and address of both his/her mother and father rather than only his father. There is, therefore, a need to go carefully through the

*One of my students here in the Para centre has only lately opened up and started communicating. Six months ago when we went to the community to identify children we found him sitting in the corner of his hut, staring vacantly at the roof and not talking at all. We were told that the family of four children and the mother had undergone long starvation because the father had left them to marry again.*

Voice of a Teacher

existing laws on family responsibility for child support and bring about necessary legal/administrative change to correct the situation.

The traditional laws relating to inheritance discriminate against women. Under the Hindu Law, a female's right to inherit from her father is very limited. Under the Muslim Personal Law women usually, but not invariably, receive half the share of their male counterparts as inheritance.

According to the existing legal provision girls under 14 are incapable of consenting to sexual intercourse. Considering the limited exposure to sex education in the schools, the social taboo against discussing related issues and existing atrocities, doubts arise against the capability of girls above 14 years consenting to sexual intercourse. There is a need to discuss the issue, identify possible measures to improve the existing situation. and arrive at a consensus for amending the legal provision.

### **3.2.5 *Ethnic Minorities***

The CRC has several articles which refer to the right of the child to experience and be exposed to his/her own cultural environment. In Bangladesh, neither the constitutional provisions nor the laws are in conflict with these rights. What is now needed is to build on these and work out a policy framework for action at the ground level.

### **3.2.6 *Children in a Situation of Emergency (Article 22)***

There are no special laws/government orders in Bangladesh to take care of children in such difficult situations, although there is a clear need for the same in view of the frequent influx of refugees into Bangladesh.

### **3.2.7 *Children with Disabilities***

The existing legal provisions focus only on the mentally ill and the polio victims. Children with other disabilities are totally neglected. The property of the mentally ill is protected through curatorship provisions and there are regulatory processes for managing hospitals for them.

Supporting the inclusion of children with disabilities in the mainstream education, there is an estimate that 60% of these children could attend primary school with little or no adaptations. A further 20% could attend a formal primary school with some adaptations<sup>3</sup>

In accordance with the commitment to the requirements of the CRC and mainstreaming children with disabilities, there is an objective need to strengthen legal instruments for children with disabilities.

### **3.2.8 *Who is a "Child"?***

The concept of 'child' has been given varied definitions by different Acts and statutes in force in Bangladesh (See Appendix 8 for more details). The definition of a child in the existing laws contradicts one another and is inconsistent with that of the CRC. This inconsistency in defining the age of the child in the existing laws indicates the tendency not to deviate too much from the ground realities (dictated by the prevailing norms) and the lack of a holistic view and a principled commitment towards children.

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<sup>3</sup> Joint Appraisal /Pre-Appraisal Mission 27 April-19 May 2003

This inconsistency in defining the child is another reason for poor implementation.

There is no uniform definition of the child in these laws. The aim should be to bring it in conformity with the CRC definition of the child. Anyone below 18 years of age should be considered a child.

### **3.2.9 Registration of Birth**

It is legally binding to maintain records of birth. (See Appendix 8). The relevant records of age are required to adequately plan educational inputs for children, combat child marriage, child labour and identify atrocities. It is the function of the Pourashabhas and City Corporations in the urban areas and the Union Parishads in rural areas. In practice implementation of the law is extremely weak and inadequate and people are not aware about the necessity to obtain birth certificates.

*" We obtain a birth certificates only if there is a dire requirement for it, and most birth certificate are fictitious. We enroll children in school without birth certificates. The school authorities are concerned with the age of the child which can be given by the parents/ grandparents / elder siblings or anyone else who goes to enroll the child."*

**Voice of a parent**

### **3.2.10 Health and Nutrition**

The Bangladesh Constitution lays down that the state has the duty to provide social security, health care and nutrition, particularly to the children. So far, this has hardly been translated into either formulation of concrete policies or effective action. In Bangladesh statistics indicate that a large number of children are malnourished. Malnutrition effects growth of children in many ways, causing stunting or low height to weight ratio, intellectual impairments, etc.

Some success is visible in the government programme of providing Vitamin-A supplementation, which has resulted in contributing to the reduction of child mortality and preventable blindness. The child focused Extended Programme for Immunization (EPAI) has also had a positive impact. Some efforts have also been made for increasing nutrition awareness and education by both government departments and NGOs, but a great deal remains to be accomplished. The state is legally bound (See Appendix 8) to take all effective and appropriate measures with a view to abolishing traditional practices prejudicial to the health of children, even if this involves a diminution of the concept of cultural rights. The reality is that in many areas, neither the people nor the so-called enforcers are even aware of these.

The discussion above clearly indicates that most of the child related laws in Bangladesh are concerned with protection rights, and only a few deal with either provision or participation rights. In practice the poor and the disadvantaged have not been able to derive much benefit from the legal system. This is primarily because of high costs of legal cases, lack of awareness, and excessive delays. A UN report points out, "Bangladesh has too many laws but too little justice. The country is burdened with shelf-loads of outdated laws but lacks the resources to enforce even a few of them effectively. The country has too few courts and judges, so there is a huge backlog of cases." (UNDP, 1997)

### 3.3 National Plan of Action for Children<sup>4</sup>

The Government of Bangladesh is developing the third Five-Year National Plan of Action (NPA) for children. It outlines the goals for children, strategies to be adopted, programmes to be implemented to achieve the stated goals, and mechanism for monitoring progress. This NPA will be the most progressive to date, in that the main stakeholders the children, are being given a scope to participate in the process.

Through consultations held nationally in districts and divisions children have had the opportunity to raise their concerns, analyze and prioritize issues that affect their lives. They discussed issues that they would like to see addressed in the NPA. They have also given suggestions about how to address these issues. The list of twelve priority issues that children identified to be addressed in the third NPA for Children include the following:

- i. **Fulfilling Basic Needs:** education, clothing, housing, recreation, security etc.
- ii. **Security:** addressing acid throwing, trafficking, drugs, children used in political activities, early marriage
- iii. **Discrimination:** based on dis/ability, ethnicity, and gender.
- iv. **Child Labor:** using children in hazardous and/or illegal work, exploiting children by not paying their wages
- v. **Abuse:** sexual, physical and mental, including children in jails
- vi. **Health:** lack of medical equipment and hospitals, malnutrition, poor vaccination, no free treatment.
- vii. **Participation:** children's opinions are not taken into account, no scope for participation in any aspect
- viii. **Education:** ethnic children's problems in education, admission problems, cost of education materials, discriminatory attitudes of teachers, stipend problems.
- ix. **Recreation:** no playgrounds, less opportunity for recreation for different children (gender, class)
- x. **Housing:** lack of housing for children living on the street
- xi. **River erosion:** causes children to become itinerant.
- xii. **Pollution:** children suffer from black vehicular smoke

Education was a major focus of concern during consultations at all levels, and emerged as an independent issue in the list of 12 NPA priorities decided upon by the children during central level consultations. The concerns expressed during the consultations on education included child abuse, early marriage, discrimination based on ethnicity socio-economic status gender and disability, lack of access to education, child labour etc. These concerns are in tune with those emerging from issues raised in the discussion above on legal provisions affecting children.

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<sup>4</sup> The text in the para 3.3 is an adapted from the paper "NPA for Children development process with and by children" by Els Heijnen Senior Education Adviser (Save the Children Sweden /UK)

### **3.3.1 *Child abuse***

Issues of abuse emerged strongly during consultations, with children from most areas citing physical, mental and even sexual abuse by teachers as a serious concern to be addressed in the NPA. Children noted that humiliation and abuse at school (and on the way to school) plays a part in them dropping out of school. Some mentioned being prohibited from attending school by parents or other family decision makers.

Children felt that teachers (and parents) should be trained on children's rights and the CRC (including principles of non-discrimination) as well as being equipped with alternative methods of discipline and teaching. It was pointed out that teachers are already equipped with some alternative measures to physical punishment in the classroom and often still do not choose to use them. Therefore it was suggested that teachers be monitored to eliminate physical punishment in the classroom. In a broader sense, the children felt that there is a need about spreading the awareness of existing laws on abuse with all caretakers (teachers, parents/ family etc.). Adults who abuse children should be punished, and that government should pay more attention to the various types of abuse (mental and sexual, as well as physical).

Children also linked education with early marriage as another form of child abuse. When a girl or boy is married early, before the legal ages of 18 and 21 respectively, many aspects of their lives are damaged or curtailed: their development and empowerment, health (by childbearing and abuse) and their education. Marriage usually signals the end of a child's education especially the girl child. Children brought this up during consultations as a serious education related problem, and it should be suggested that an end to the practice is also the responsibility of those involved in the field of education.

### **3.3.2 *Discrimination***

There was a great deal of concern expressed by children over discrimination based on ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender and disability. The children felt that children of ethnic or linguistic minorities do not have access to education, either because they are neglected, excluded or denied admission by teachers or administrators, or because they could not speak fluent Bangla. They felt that it was the responsibility of the government, schools and teachers to end this type of existing discrimination, and to set up programmes that can cater to the needs of minority children.

### **3.3.3 *Lack of access***

Children also expressed their unhappiness about the limited access to education for their peers with disabilities. They felt that this is both due to schools' failure and parents and families unfairly keeping their children with disabilities behind closed doors for fear of social stigma. Children recommended awareness raising to combat stigmatization and discrimination, and proactive efforts on the part of government, schools and communities to ensure accessibility. Children also felt that girls face difficulty in attending schools due to a lack of appropriate toilet facilities, and protection and security threats due to 'eve teasing' on the way to school.

### **3.3.4 *Provision of Stipend***

The issue of stipends deserves special mention here, as children discussed it repeatedly at the various levels of consultation. According to the children, stipends do not adequately cover their

costs, and are often withheld from the needy and given according to family influence of certain students. Often times the stipends are not given out in time, and this results in children dropping out of school. Poor students are discriminated against by teachers, and may not be able to attend school because they cannot meet the 'hidden costs' of education (materials, uniforms, etc.) and often have problems receiving stipends. It is noteworthy here that the children suggest themselves as monitors of the stipend implementation programme, an idea that deserves further investigation.

### **3.3.5 *Child labor***

Issues of child labor and participation in relation to education also emerged during consultations. Being forced to work, either due to poverty or being compelled by adults drastically reduces many children's chances of attending school; it was suggested that employers, government and adults in the community bear responsibility for seeing to it that, if children must work, they are still given access to quality education that they can afford and can accommodate in their work schedule.

### **3.3.6 *Child participation***

They felt that there is a general lack of respect for children's participation and views in family and society are an impediment to their education, such as when decisions are made on behalf of a child that she or he should be married and discontinue schooling. Children suggested raising awareness to change such negative attitudes towards children's participation in decision-making.

## **3.4 Bangladesh Disability Welfare Act 2001**

The Bangladesh Disability Welfare Act was enacted recently in 2001. It provides legislative support to ensure education of children with disabilities. Advocacy, campaigning, rallies and demonstrations by activists have had a direct influence in the enactment. An offshoot development has been that a Special Foundation for the Welfare of the disabled has been established.

## **3.5 Policies**

### **3.5.1 *Bangladesh National Policy on Disability (1995)***

The Bangladesh National Policy on Disability (1995) indicated creation of options for education of children and adults with disabilities. The policy includes ensuring rights of people with disabilities, equal opportunities in education, training and rehabilitation, employment, income, maintenance, social security, accessibility to the physical environment, accessibility to public information (Braille, sign language, audio and visual aids), incentives for employment and provisions for prevention, detection and treatment of disabilities.

### **3.5.2 *National Education Policy (2000)***

The National Education Policy discusses Special Education (in Chapter 18) along with Health and Physical Education, Scout and Girl Guide. The policy has twenty-eight chapters, each dealing with different aspects of education. Special Education is the only area, which does not find an exclusive discussion. Is this a reflection on the importance given to children with



disabilities? There is no discussion in the policy about the needs of the large majority of marginalized groups of children other than those with disabilities, girls and the children from poor homes.

In principle the stated aim is that “the children unable to fulfill their daily needs due to physical and mental problems need special education, competent remedial measures, and special care nursing. The deaf, blind, physically handicapped, mentally handicapped and the epileptics fall within the purview of special children. In accordance with the degree of disability, they are identified as lightly, moderately and seriously handicapped. The principal aim of special education is to help the disabled children establish themselves in the society through special programs depending on their degree of disability.”

The strategy to be adopted (detailed in Appendix 10) highlights the need for a survey to ascertain the magnitude of children with disability. The issue of concern is as to who will conduct this survey and how? It suggests urgency to develop the primary schools (Government and non government) for the handicapped. Is there a presumption that no child will reach the secondary level of education? The policy discusses the need to set up special schools and also the provision of coordinated education programmes. The later again are for children at the primary level. The Policy states the necessity of including disability issues in teachers’ training curriculum, so as to enable the regular teachers to manage children with disabilities in regular settings. However, again the focus is limited to only children with disabilities.

#### **Existing Government Policies on Language**

The Government National Education Policy (NEP) indicates the following:

- The existing disparity will be removed to create the opportunity for all of getting education of the same standard and characteristics through the mother tongue.
- Subjects in the primary level will include mother tongue.
- In the curriculum and syllabus of every level of education our mother tongue should be reflected (NEP 2000, page 63).

The National Education Policy does not include any specific guideline to either address or facilitate planning for inclusive education. Children with disabilities are all considered to be one group with no differences among them. Negative use of terminology such as, “handicapped”, “deaf and dumb”, “children with physical and mental problems’ and statements such as “they also deserve some special consideration” do little to change existing perceptions and attitudes. There is a focus on “degrees of disability”, alternative curriculum, and category and groups of children rather than on the common needs of the children including those with disability. The assumption in the lines “the disabled children develop fast if they are allowed to receive education with normal children” is against the very basis of inclusive practice. Research indicates that all children gain in inclusive learning settings and not just those with disabilities.

The National Education Policy uses negative terminology. This needs to be replaced by positive facilitative terminology . For example,

#### **Negative terminology used**

Handicapped

Deaf and dumb

Children with physical and mental problems

Disabled children

#### **Facilitative terminology suggested**

Challenged

Children with difficulties in hearing and speech

Children who are physically and mentally challenged

Children with disability

A separate chapter (number seventeen) of the National Policy deals with the issues related to women and rightly emphasizes the need to educate them and the poor. It states that “the principal aim is to create awareness and confidence among women to increase their urge for equal rights; to inspire women and make them capable of participating in national life at all levels, to ensure participation of women in socio economic development and alleviation of poverty, to help in the economic progress through self employment; to inspire in the building of a happy and prosperous family; to create such attitude and self confidence so that they can actively participate in the elimination of dowry and violence against women.” The strategy suggested in the policy involves providing special facilities such as special scholarships including funds to promote education, plan vocational and technical courses (part and full time) provide loans on low interest rates, appropriate changes in the curriculum and text books highlighting equal right and promoting science and other professional courses. The involvement of women in all policy formulation and decision making on education at all levels is sought.

### 3.5.3 *National Policy of Action*

The National Policy of Action (NPA), corresponding to the Fifth Five Year Plan of Bangladesh (1997-2002), consists of six sectors, namely basic education, health and nutrition, water and environmental sanitation, children in need of special protection, social integration, participation, cultural rights, information and communication. For each

The NPA is based on a “needs” rather than a “rights” approach, and hence it lacks the urgency and the commitment that go with the latter, as well as being far short of the CRC requirement. It sounds more like a well-meaning document than a hard-hitting and realistic national agenda on the children of Bangladesh.

sector, an attempt has been made to identify programmes of action, objectives, strategies, major tasks, lead agency, supporting agencies and outputs. However, the different sections of the document appear unconnected, and a holistic framework seems to be missing.

The more crucial problem, as it has always been, is that, given the lack of political and administrative will, weak coordination, inadequate financial and personnel support and the all-pervasive inefficiency and corruption in the bureaucracy, one cannot see how the NPA will get translated into whatever tangible outputs envisaged.<sup>5</sup>

## 3.6 **Programmes**

### 3.6.1 *Executive Structure*

The local government bodies cover both urban and rural areas. There is only one effective tier of local government in the rural areas, namely the Union Parishad. At the thana level, there is a coordinating body consisting of elected Union Parishad functionaries and local officials for the oversight of development activities at that level. For the three hill districts, Rangamti, Khagrachari and Bandarban, there are three Hill District Local Government Parishads with wider power and functions. In the urban areas, there are four city corporations for the four large cities and Pourashabhas for the other urban centers.

There is, for example, only one police officer for every 1300 people – among the lowest ratios in the world. However, many people do not regret this, given the corruption and lack of motivation among the police. Everyday, the newspapers are replete with stories of police involvement in rape, torture, murder, extortion, etc. either directly or indirectly

Siddiqui KU 2001: Better Days Better Lives, UPL, Dhaka

<sup>5</sup> Siddiqui KU 2001: Better Days Better Lives, UPL, Dhaka

For policy-making (and implementation) regarding the CRC, the most relevant government bodies are the Ministries of Women and Children Affairs, and Social Welfare, and the Directorate of Women and the Directorate of Social Welfares under these two Ministries (given the cabinet system of government, all important policies, irrespective of the initiating Ministry, have to be approved by the Cabinet of Ministers, along with inputs from other Ministries). They have minimal budgets and affect only a very small number of children. The Ministry of Social Welfare runs a number of institutions for children, including orphanages, vagrant homes and the Tongi Rehabilitation Centre. These have little impact on the situation of children in Bangladesh as a whole

The recent government emphasis on primary education has consisted of (a) creation of a separate Division for primary and mass education (b) food-for-education programme targeted especially at girls from poor families (c) school-building construction and (d) legislation for ensuring compulsory primary education and (e) the preparation of the PEDP II macro plan.

The kind of education that is now being imparted to students at the primary and secondary levels of the state education system along with the methodology of imparting the same, can provide neither relevant knowledge and skills nor humanist values, sensitive to the children including the large number from the disadvantaged section of society.

**Voice of parent**

As regards the quality of education imparted and values inculcated in the young minds, the situation remains highly unsatisfactory. The existing top-down learning approach suppresses the spirit of inquisitiveness among children. This is primarily because of very little attention has been given to the quality of teachers' recruitment and training. Curriculum development and teaching methodology have been thoroughly neglected. There is practically no role for local government bodies in monitoring and supervising primary schools and the accountability of the teachers is poor.

**Voice of a school Headteacher**

The total budget for education has, no doubt, increased over the years but it remains woefully inadequate in comparison with the need. If the management of education in the public sector remains corrupt and inefficient and the money continues to be spent mostly on physical infrastructure and "transfer payments" such as teachers' salaries and stipends for students (as against course/ curricula improvement, teachers' training, etc.) then the additional amount allocated to education would simply go down the drain.

**Voice of a retired Government Administrator/ grandparent**

### **3.6.2 PEDP II (Primary Education Development Programme-II)**

In 2002 the Ministry of Primary Mass Education (MOPME) and the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) jointly with stakeholders and development partners prepared the Primary Education Development Program (PEDP II) Macro Plan for years 2003-2008. The macro plan will support the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals relating to poverty reduction, Universal Primary Education and gender equity and contribute to the targets set out in the Governments' National Strategy for Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction and EFA National Plan of Action. It is large scale in terms of beneficiaries and funding and proposes to introduce changes in the education system targeting at significant policy reforms and capacity building. Attention is to be given to improvement of governance and at strengthening organizational and institutional capacity at all levels and improve planning, management, program coordination, monitoring and evaluation.

The four major components of PEDP II are:

**Component 1:** Quality improvement through organizational development and capacity building

**Component 2:** Quality improvement in Schools and Classrooms

**Component 3:** Quality Improvement through infrastructure development

**Component 4:** Improving and supporting equitable access to quality schooling

In comparison to the earlier Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP I) the PEDP II macro plan has been designed as a comprehensive and coordinated sub sector program that will strengthen the system to deliver quality formal primary education to all children in the long term.

PEDP I consisted of a series of projects which addressed the needs of the marginalized groups of children in a limited manner. In PEDP I, projects were instrumental in establishing many important models of quality improvement, but in virtually all cases they were never taken to scale. Children across the country have benefited only in a limited manner.

The proposed structure of PEDP II management and monitoring is designed to avoid the drawbacks of lack of coordination and cohesion and impact nationally. The existing gender disaggregated monitoring will be strengthened and monitoring indicators for girls and boys from different socio-economic backgrounds will be included.

#### *3.6.2.1 IE and PEDP II – An Analysis*

The objectives, design and implementation plan indicate that PEDP II can provide the required impetus to inclusive educational practice. However, IE has been incorporated in PEDP II limited to a disability perspective and as such is not in tune with the concept as developed in the EFA Dakar Framework for Action (Paragraph 19). The PEDP macro plan for example states that, “a special needs task force would be established to devise strategies to mainstream special needs children into primary schools. Annual events will be planned and implemented at the school level during education week to raise awareness of good health for good education, provide reference service for children with special needs, facilitate early detection and inclusion of children with disabilities.”

Inclusive education can be planned effectively and given the required impetus in PEDP II if the initiatives are planned with care and progress evaluated on an ongoing basis. The following areas need attention:

- *Encourage the development of a clear understanding of inclusive practice.* There is a need to plan to **meet the needs of all children** including the vast majority who are out of the schools and are socially discriminated due to deep-rooted societal prejudice and stereotyping.
- *Form effective links with IE through the Innovation Grants and the district based model schools.* **Care needs to be taken to develop the models** as the concept of inclusion is at a nascent stage of development in the country. Some issues that require are: How will the practices cater to the needs of all children and how can these be mainstreamed? Who will formulate the proposals? What will be the best method to publicize the existence of these Innovation Grants? How will the proposals be sanctioned? How will the programmes be supported and monitored? The scope for IE pilot/model schools or cluster of schools in an administrative area (formal/ non-formal) needs to be explored with care. What will be the criteria to select the model schools? How can support be provided to them? How can other schools in the region be motivated to adopt IE practice? How will the learning's from the implementation be disseminated?

- *PEDP II proposes to establish posts in special needs education within the Policy and Operations Division. Thought needs to be given to the need for such a move as **setting up separate posts is against being inclusive in practice**. How will separate posts be mainstreamed? What should be the minimum and desirable qualifications for the posts? How will continuity with the existing recruitment and incentive policy be maintained? What in-service training will be required for the new recruits and who will provide it and at what interval? How will the problem of frequent transfers be handled?*
- *PDEP II proposes to provide training and support to teachers and head teachers of children with special needs, promote the role of the community in meeting their needs and encourage additional support at school level. Well meaning intentions, which raise issues for consideration; what is the understanding regarding who are the “children with special needs”? Is it limited to children with disabilities or does it also include other marginalized groups of children? How will separate departments collate their inputs? Who will provide the training? Which existing practices can be studied for developing an understanding of IE beyond disability? What awareness building is required to motivate the community to support the inclusion of all children in the schools? How will capacity building of trainers be done on IE?*

The salient features of the proposed activities of PEDP II, which can promote inclusive education along with some observations, are tabulated below:

#### **Component-1 Quality improvement through organizational development and capacity building:**

<b>Features</b>	<b>Observations</b>
Enhanced resources at school level to achieve quality improvement in learning with equitable access.	Decentralized and need based selection of resources should be done with the involvement of teachers. Teachers need to be encouraged to use the available resources flexibly and share their experiences regarding the same. Children can be motivated to collect low cost material and prepare educational toys in groups. Teachers can act as facilitators.
Developing key outreach and support mechanisms at Upazila level.	A thorough analysis of the existing support and its impact needs to be studied and ways of eliciting additional support found through a collective dialogue with all concerned.
Additional functions will be assigned to schools and Upazilas, which will be strengthened in terms of infrastructure and staff.	There is a need to discuss collectively and arrive at agreed roles of school and Upazilla level staff, considering the existing needs of the child population (both in and out of school).
Upazila Education Team will inspire, train and support School Management Committees (SMCs), head teachers and teachers in their roles to improve the quality of learning for all children at the primary level. A primary education technical team will provide leadership and training, professional support and coordination to the Upazilas within District. Decentralization and devolution of authority and responsibility to the middle and local levels of the education system.	Monitoring the impact of training and making provisions for onsite support need to be planned with care. Opportunities need to be provided to the Upazila Education Team and technical team to observe inclusive practice, analyse and discuss implementation on a regular basis. All team members need to be convinced about the gains of IE for all children. Close periodic monitoring to see the impact of the change and seeking the view of teachers and Para staff on a regular basis should to be put in the system.
Encourage the local education leaders, parents and the local community to make decisions concerning improving the quality of education.	Developing a clear understanding of the “why ”and “ how” of inclusive practice is essential at all levels.

## Component 2: Quality improvement in Schools and Classrooms.

Improvements and changes in the education system:

Features	Observations
Strengthening NAPE, NCTB, PTIs, URCs and District Offices and communities in which the schools are located	Knowledge about the philosophy and practice of inclusion needs to be imparted to concerned personnel in these institutions. Study visits can be planned to low resource countries in the region to develop clearer understanding of practice.
Provision of essential tools of learning- quality text books and materials appropriate to particular grade levels, curriculum development, evaluation, testing and assessment	<p>Care needs to be taken to see that the culture, life style and issues related to the marginalised groups are well as in the curriculum and not in a token manner as is being done currently.</p> <p>The timely availability of the required number of textbooks in schools is a priority issue.</p> <p>The quality of textbooks should be improved especially in terms of quality of paper used, print size, use of colour illustrations and layout.</p> <p>Flexibility in curriculum transaction and evaluation of performance based on understanding and comprehension of ideas rather than rote memorization of facts need to be encouraged.</p>
<p>Emphasis on Human Resource Development:</p> <p>Appropriate selection of teachers and head teacher through review of incentives and rewards, improved pre-service and regular (preferably annual) in-service training supported through sub cluster training. The latter will continue with the earlier initiatives of PEDP I to assist teachers to adopt child centred methods.</p>	Better trained professionally supported teachers and child friendly and responsive environments benefit all children. IE training should be provided to all professionals and form part of teacher training. It should discuss ways of making classrooms more inclusive, child centered and gender sensitive and provide them with the skills how to deal with children from diverse backgrounds and with different abilities and make learning meaningful for all. In addition the trainees need to gain confidence about managing diverse classrooms and assess learning outcomes effectively.
<p>Increased emphasis be given to the role of communities and participation with SMC's in development of School Learning Improvement Plans (SLIPs)</p> <p>Providing for special needs of children students of poor and illiterate families using resources provided through Innovative Grant funds.</p> <p>The establishment of minimum standard for Primary School Quality Level (PSQL) school improvement and common learning standards.</p>	<p>These initiatives should take into account issues related to providing access and resources to improve the learning conditions for children with special needs.</p> <p>Building a community based EMIS, which would improve the quality of information on local education situations.</p> <p>There is a need to develop a shared responsibility / ownership for improved inclusive planning and quality improvement.</p>
Community based Baby Classes	Should include the development of pre reading and writing cognitive skills related to the children's home environment.
The allocation of resources to indigenous, remote special needs and poor student groups.	These should be based on periodically assessed local needs.
Filing up vacant posts.	<p>Care should be taken to fill up posts preferably by qualified women at the lower primary levels especially.</p> <p>Relaxation of qualifications should be done for selecting teachers from marginalised groups.</p>
Devolution of authority to school (SMC) Upazila and enhanced resources at school level is essential for improved classroom teaching and learning quality	<p>Adequate support for improving quality and for performance monitoring cannot be provided from a remote central location. This realization needs to be built in the staff who are used to receiving orders.</p> <p>In addition key organizational functions for schools, Upazila, District authorities for improving the participation level of marginalized groups need to be delineated.</p>

### Component –3 : Quality Improvement through infrastructure development

Features	Observations
Improving existing physical infrastructure (separate toilets for girls & boys) water supply, furniture, black boards etc. and providing new infrastructure facilities, in schools, PTI's, URC, education offices in line with PSQL requirements.	<p>Care needs to be taken to ensure that construction of new classrooms (proposed 30,000) and toilets are child friendly and include constructions such as ramps (which are useful not only for children with physical difficulties but for all children). The construction of ramps is known to be cheaper as compared to building stairs.</p> <p>Most schools were found to be very noisy, there is street noise and children can hear the class next door. There is a need to prepare the school environment.</p> <p>Safety measures should be adhered to which again are beneficial for all children.</p> <p>More schools /classrooms, better facilities are essential as classrooms with 80 plus children violate children rights to quality education/ interactive methods fail in overcrowded classrooms.</p> <p>Construction of classrooms should ensure good light and ventilation; promote active learning, display of children's work, and storage space for teachers and children's material.</p> <p>Painting the lower half of walls with black paint can be done to provide children with additional writing space( IDEAL school experience).</p> <p>The involvement of the community in the construction of new schools should be given due emphasis. This is seen to motivate them to develop a sense of ownership and help in maintenance of the schools.</p> <p>School compounds need to have playground space and play equipment, based on local games and popular sports. Care should be taken to adapt them suitably to allow all children equal opportunity of use.</p> <p>Important to ensure that children have proper access to the school as what is the use of a well constructed child friendly school where the route/path that leads to the school is poorly constructed, is unsafe or becomes almost inaccessible during the rains etc?</p>

### Component – 4: Improving and supporting equitable access to quality schooling

#### Innovative Grants

Under PEDP II access to quality formal primary education will be improved and supported. An “Innovation Grant”, a flexible pool of funding will resource innovative program. These practical innovations and creative methods will enhance the quality of education for working children and those living in poverty, especially those in urban areas, for children with disabilities, and for children from minority communities. Grants will be awarded for new proposals and for the continuation and expansion of existing innovations based on collaboration between communities, government and civil societies.

Support is planned for significantly enhancing the institutional capacity of DPE at the Central and other levels and policy reforms and interventions to meet the needs of all children. In addition, a

review and adjustment of the criteria for eligibility for stipends of the Primary Education Stipend Programme and other funds is planned.

Support to the implementation of the Rangamati Declaration of Education pertaining to primary education in CHT area and areas with ethnic minority. This will be done through:

- Collaboration of MOPME with Ministry of Special Affairs.
- Flexibility in qualification of recruitment of teachers especially female teachers, and teachers from minority.
- Preparation of learning materials in local languages.

### ***3.6.3 Primary Education Stipend and Food for Education Programme***

The Primary Education Stipend Programme was launched in September 2002 to enable poor rural families to not only enroll and to retain their children in school, but also to provide an incentive to those children excluded by poverty to complete their primary schooling rather than engage in work to earn. Although the stipend programme is considered to be part of the Government Poverty Reduction Strategy, it has been included, and budgeted, as a formal education sub-sector programme of the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MOPME), rather than as a part of the Ministry of Social Welfare, and has been included as a pro-poor strategy in PEDP-II.

Together with the Female Education Awareness Programme, the stipend programmes appear to have been effective in creating awareness among the community of the value of girls' education for the socio-economic development of the country. After an extensive review of the existing Food for Education (FFE) Programme by the Government it was decided to merge the FFE with the stipend programme to more effectively reach its objective of increasing Primary School enrolments and reduce dropouts.

One of the eligibility criteria for receiving a stipend is for a female student is to remain unmarried until the Secondary School Certificate examination, and this has contributed to decrease in the instances of early marriages for girls and a decline in the population growth. With the increase in the literacy rate, the quality of life and access to productive work of female has also been increased and aspirations of guardians for their daughters have been enhanced.

#### ***3.6.3.1 Selection Criteria***

The selection criteria in the beginning of the programme targeted the poorest 40% of the enrolled students in rural Primary schools. Recently, the Stipend programme coverage has been extended to cover also urban primary schools. In this way it is intended that the stipend programme will distribute Tk 100 per month to families sending one child to school and TK 125 per month to families sending more than one child. The stipend is also linked to regular attendance and performance level of children. In the past it has been the role of Head Teachers to identify those children living in poverty within their school catchments areas, and to encourage them to attend school.



### *3.6.3.2 Concerns*

Is it appropriate to place the responsibility on the head teacher to identify the 40% most deserving of financial assistance, which may be difficult for many Head Teachers within their communities? Concerns have also been raised with tying the stipend to attendance (85%) and performance (50%), as families living in poverty are the least able to maintain children's attendance and therefore performance, owing to their financial situation and the need for all members of the family to work. Families living in poverty tend to be among the least well educated and are often illiterate and unable to assist children with their education.

Schools that are not able to qualify 15% of their students in the scholarship examinations may lose their stipend allocation and those attaining 'D' grades do not qualify for the stipend. These selection criteria may place added pressures on head teachers to make sure their pupils graduate, which may result in the programme not being implemented in the desired most transparent way.

Concerns have also been raised regarding the continuation of the programme, unless the available funding increases to meet the additional demand that this incentive will undoubtedly create for younger children from poor families entering school in subsequent years. These issues, and others, may need to be addressed during the life of the PEDP II.

## **CHAPTER 4: EXISTING PRACTICES- MOVING TOWARDS INCLUSION**

## CHAPTER 4 : EXISTING PRACTICES - MOVING TOWARDS INCLUSION

This chapter discusses the programmes visited and observations made of practices (NGO and GOB) in Bangladesh during the course of the study.

### 4.1 NGO Efforts and Inclusion

The beginning of the NGO intervention in the country on a major scale can be traced back to the early 1970s. Non-formal education for the disadvantaged group and reaching the usually un-reached groups has been one of its important concerns. In this section, we shall take a brief look at the general scenario of the NGO-NFE in the recent times, with particular attention to the extent of inclusiveness these efforts are designed to address. It is an indicative overview giving a few examples chosen for their impact on the non- formal primary education sector, and their approaches that promotes some essential form of inclusiveness.

By encouraging and enabling the poor disadvantaged children to enroll, attend, achieve and enjoy, the school has generated a real enthusiasm among families towards education.

**Voice of a parent**

#### 4.1.1 BRAC

BRAC's NFE has had an impact on the education of disadvantaged groups growing steadily from offering primary education programmes for only three years to gradually including all five primary classes in 4 year schooling. The education programs have been designed to include children of the poor and underprivileged families. Access, equity and gender are among its major emphasis.

##### 4.1.1.1 Salient features

- The schools are well-lighted, low roof, bamboo and asbestos constructions, a single class in a single room. The class and the school upgrade itself to the next grade as the time progresses.
- Contact hours-3 hours up to class III, 4 hours for class IV and V. The schools operate for 6 days a week, and there are 270 working days in a year.
- One teacher teaches 30-35 students of which 50 to 70 per cent are girls.
- Women teachers are employed from the local area. The minimum qualification is SSC. All teachers are provided in-service training with a focus on using active learning approaches in the classrooms.
- Teachers work in double shifts.
- The schools do not follow the Government textbooks. The teachers use books based on the BRAC curriculum. Science, Math, Social



Science and languages (English and Bangla) are taught.

- Children sit on the floor (matted with gunny bags/bamboo) facing each other.
- The classrooms are tidy with display of children's work and teaching aids accessible but in limited use. Attempts are made to use active teaching-learning methodologies and involve children in the learning process. Children are mostly found to be confident in interacting with visitors.



Children attending class sitting on the floor.

*Courtesy Els Heijnen*

A striking feature is the order in the class, with footwear, bags in neat rows, and books and notebooks neatly stacked up in piles in front of each child. A slate chalk and a small bottle with water and a cloth to use for erasing the writing on the slates is also seen with each child.

- Graduates are mainstreamed to the formal education.

#### *4.1.1.2 Efforts Towards I E*

BRAC has attempted to include children of ethnic minority groups in their education programme and has confined the efforts within the groups in North Western area of the country (till the year 2000). Currently other groups have been included and four general clusters formed in (i) Chittagong Hill Tract (CHT), (ii) Tea garden areas, (iii) Greater Mymensingh areas (for Garo and Hajongs), and (iv) the North-West regions.

To arrive at feasible strategies for better inclusion, BRAC studied the potential problems and found linguistic and cultural alienation being of serious concern. To address these workshops were organized with members and opinion leaders of both the mainstream and ethnic groups.

Initiatives were taken to provide training to the teachers and supervisors. More interactions between children of these communities through various extracurricular activities are organized to improve the cultural amity. In schools where the ethnic students are in overwhelming number, teachers from the community are preferred. In 700 of these schools mother tongue of the ethnic minorities is used. Supplementary materials are published in ethnic minority languages using Bangla script. According to BRAC officials in order to see that ethnic minority children are not discriminated socially, attempts are being made to gradually bridge indigenous and Bangla languages.

There are plans to include children with disabilities, street children, and children from families with social stigma.

#### *4.1.1.3 Observations by the team*

The Team visited BRAC Schools in Chittagong and Sylhet. In the school in Sylhet there were more girls than boys in the school (25 girls and 5 boys). A 10-year-old girl with poor vision in both eyes was studying in the school. The mother of the child approached an SMC member and got her admitted. The child takes help of her best friend - in coming to school, and for copying

the writing on the blackboard and reading the printed text properly. No attempt was made to make simple changes such as seating her close to the blackboard. In the physical exercises being demonstrated the child did not seem to be able to see the movement of the arms and read the facial expression of the teacher. She was following a different rhythm and the teacher did not notice this. Her peer felt that the girl had a good memory and remembers

*“ There is a need to identify children with disability in the area and to systematically try to meet their special needs. I suspect some of them are hidden from us as the parents feel that they cannot learn. The child we have in the school was brought in by an SMC member in the area.”*

**School Teacher**

everything that the teacher tells them. They found her friendly, helpful, and very regular and enthusiastic about coming to school. She often voices her ambition of becoming a good teacher.

The school visited in Chittagong had no child with disability. None of the children spoken to were engaged in work for earning money. Many children though worked at home and helped their parents with cooking, sweeping, child minding, marketing etc. Discussions with the children revealed that one third of them were taking private paid tuition outside the school in order to help them in their academic learning. Some children got help with home task from family members (elder siblings, uncle, father etc.). Only one child stated receiving some help from his mother. When asked to write a letter majority of the children could construct meaningful sentences.

A discussion with the BRAC team member revealed that the following salient efforts have been made:

- BRAC according to its policy, opens 14000 pre-primary schools and 5000 primary school every year. The pre-primary schools are opened near the primary school.
- BRAC is planning to strengthen initiative for the children with disability in ordinary schools. A survey is conducted for the children in the age group 5-7 years in order to determine the type and magnitude of disability. CDD is supporting the identification of children with disability.
- BRAC Pre-primary schools are planned in collaboration with the Government. The inclusion of children with mild and moderate disability is the focus.
- From January 2003, children with disabilities are being included in BRAC schools in accordance with the need. The number of visually and hearing-impaired children are kept limited to three per school. Intellectually impaired children and totally blind children are not enrolled. So far 6,495 disabled students have been enrolled in the BRAC schools. Out of them 5000 are physically impaired and the others are either visually or hearing impaired.
- A pilot programme of 8 months duration is planned for providing an orientation programme for BRAC teachers, which will be supported by IER special education unit. A core group of teachers will be trained to provide training to the other teacher (4000) in a cascade manner.
- 200 BRAC schools have been opened in the Chittagong hill tribe area. Experience indicates that medical facilities are poor in the area and there is no geographical intermingling.
- The social studies curriculum has been modified for the ethnic minority group.

#### 4.1.1.4 Issues/ Questions

- Use of ethnic minority language using Bangla script is exclusionary in nature since problems may arise during the process of mainstreaming. For example, these children may face discrimination when they go for further studies or employment beyond their ethnic/cultural community. Education can be planned only in the mother tongue or also Bangla for a few years.
- There is limited access to education as only of 30-35 children are admitted in a school which provides education up to Grade 5. There are many children who are left out in that particular area.
- Teaching and including children with physical impairment is relatively easy for inclusion and does not really challenge teachers. The recent initiative taken by BRAC to survey children with disability, have not included children with intellectual disability. Children with intellectual disabilities like other children have individual differences and should be included.
- A BRAC teacher works with the children for the entire primary cycle and this can be limiting, as children are not exposed to any variety of teaching styles. BRAC schoolteachers working in rural areas draw a lower salary than urban teachers. They feel that the Government schools have greater job security. Turn over is high which is linked closely with quality, sustainability and mainstreaming.
- As a policy more girls are enrolled in the BRAC schools. It raises questions both about inclusion and reaching out to all children. Are we not meeting the needs of a particular group (in this case girls) at the cost of other marginalized children? Some question; Are more girls admitted because boys tend to drop out as they join small trades to learn skills and earn?
- Are we providing access to all children? Only one child from the marginalized groups was seen in the two schools visited and the admission was on the initiative of the parent.
- Children and teachers need to adhere strictly to school timings. Both teacher and students were seen coming late to school;
- There is a need to review the policy regarding changing the Social Studies curriculum for children from ethnic minority. The content of Social Studies should be common for all children. Teaching methodology should role model respect and tolerance for diverse groups.

On noticing visitors to the school, two children ran frantically to call the teacher from her residence. She came in with her young baby girl. Children seem very familiar with the baby – feeding her from the milk bottle and carrying her around. The children revealed that they take turns looking after the baby and the teaching is interrupted to meet the young child's needs. Though this

is a clear pointer to a close contact between teachers and children that is important in creating a child friendly environment however the observations of poor attendance of children and teachers, and low contact hours raises questions about quality of education provided and supervision.

A child on noticing the number of children being counted in the class remarked;

*"Count books not the children in the class, as some of them have gone to do some work and will join later".*

**Child's voice**

Teachers prepare lesson plans as an official requirement but were found not even remotely doing what was planned for the week. How can they be assisted to plan for the whole class realistically?

In the two schools visited all girls were markedly taller than boys and looked older in age. Observations did not indicate how the programme was addressing the diverse needs of children of different ages.

Some children were enrolled in both the BRAC and local primary schools. As per the information shared by parents this is to seek the financial and other benefits from both systems. This raises the issue of how misleading school records can be regarding the number of children enrolled in schools.

Co-curricular activities are found to be important in the school curriculum and children are happily engaged. However, promoting creativity and enhancing self-expression of children needs special attention as the children in both the BRAC schools visited sang the same songs, recited the same poems and demonstrated the same dance sequences.



A primary school in the coastal area of Bangladesh

*Courtesy Els Heijnen*



Children taking lessons in a crowded classroom, sitting on the floor.

*Courtesy Els Heijnen*

#### **4.1.2 Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM)**

##### **4.1.2.1 Salient Features**

DAM's education programmes are conducted mainly through Gonokendra (Community Learning Centres) to ensure continued education for the new literates. These centers are established and managed by the community. Program assistants help children, adolescents and adults to use the learning materials in order to acquire literacy competencies. 1072 Gonokendras have been established.

DAM runs NFE educational programs of 4-year duration from the pre-primary up to the primary level for the disadvantaged and excluded groups. Education is provided to all out of school children of the community irrespective of age, gender, and income. DAM has 60 Urban Community Learning Centres (UCLC) in Dhaka city, with 1800 children who start at pre-primary level and carry on to class eight equivalence of 6 years. Many of the graduates continue on their own for Open University Secondary Certificate. Working children are also provided 6-month skill training at the Vocational Training Institute for working children. Trades such as audio-video, electrical, refrigeration & AC, plumbing, dressmaking etc. can be opted for. They can then be placed in a relevant job as an apprentice.

#### 4.1.2.2 Observations

The Team visited an Urban Community Learning Centre in Mohammadpur. The school management and teachers reported having 12 children with disabilities (4 physically disabled, 6 visually impaired and 2 hearing impaired children) included in their school. These children were allowed lateral entry in appropriate classes while other children had to start from the pre-primary level. Some of the children have been treated to redress their disability and by getting their eyes operated and providing hearing aids through raising Tk. 12,000 from the community and Tk. 17,000 from the donors. While some students have worked or are still working as shop assistants, domestic servants etc. most of the students do not work. Many of them are not using the vocational skills they learn, and may not practice these at all, as they seem to have rather white-collar job ambitions.

The centre runs classes from the pre-primary to Class-8. Six months training and job placement is part of the goal of the institutions. Training is provided in electrical fitting and repair work, refrigeration, air-conditioning and plumbing to the boys.

#### Issues/ Questions

- The project life is two years and additional components are added based on the donor requirement. There seems to be a lack of long term planning.
- Community learning Centres are operating for older students. There is a need to provide for services to handle social discrimination issues and problems related to the adolescent years.
- Children are not optimally using the vocational skills learned. What changes can be brought about and how can children's opinions be also sought? What efforts are required to help children get proper placement?
- Why are children with disabilities not attending the school regularly?
- The classroom environment is crowded and lacks proper ventilation. The access is not child friendly. How can the required changes be introduced?
- Micro credit schemes are operating. Their effectiveness needs to be monitored with care.

#### 4.1.3 Underprivileged Children's Education Program (UCEP)

UCEP has been working in the field of child labour (working children) since 1972. The main innovative feature of the programme is that it provides both general and technical education followed by employment support services to working children living in urban slums. UCEP offers a comprehensive solution to the needs of working children by opening an opportunity to attend schools in any convenient time of the day available to them without sacrificing their present income /job.

The skill-training program in UCEP is dynamically responsive to the job market needs which facilitate the graduates to get gainful employment opportunity in the labour market.





At present 24000 working children are receiving education and skill training through 30 general schools, 3 technical schools and 7 para trade centers in different cities.

An attempt is made to maintain a gender balance and priority is given to girls during admission. In the schools girls are around 50% while in technical education they are about 35%.

#### *4.1.3.1 Efforts towards IE*

##### *4.1.3.1.1 UCEP's Inclusive School*

Education in the UCEP School in Chittagong is from the preparatory to Class-VIII level and education is provided in four and a half year. Each academic session is of 6 months duration. Skill training is provided to children after they complete four and a half years of schooling. The school policy is based on the principles of inclusive practice and over the years the management has promoted planned inclusion in the school.

The school has currently 708 children on roll. They have been admitted based on a child survey conducted within two-kilometer area of the school. It was seen that the discriminated groups of children with no access to education included working children, children with disabilities, orphans and those belonging to the “Bihari” community. Poverty, lack of proper water supply, and poor crowded housing conditions were common for all the families surveyed. The survey revealed a large number of children with disabilities probably because no other school in the vicinity was admitting them. 154 children with physical and intellectual disabilities were identified and admitted in the school. The survey also indicated that in the school catchment area there are a good number of poor ‘Bihari’ families (Urdu speaking families migrated from India during 1947 partition). In society the children from these families feel discriminated because of their language, historical alienation, poverty and low status because of their work. The school has included 298 children from these families. Some children were also identified and admitted from among the orphans in the community.

Almost all children in the school are working children. A talk with them reveals that boys are engaged as domestic helpers, porter in the market place, assistants to shop keepers and barbers. Since there was a shortage of water in the area, some boys were engaged in fetching water to make some small earnings. Girls are involved in paper-packet making, stitching and embroidery. These children often have no holidays and work for at least 3 to 4 hours a day. Coming to school is an escape from the drudgery of hard work and most of the children come to school regularly.



Inclusive environment in the classroom  
needs to be planned with care

- The school has a child friendly construction and has taken special care to provide access to children with physical difficulties. These include construction of broad ramps at the entrance of the school and the classroom building block. The doors of the classroom have been broadened to accommodate wheelchair users. Some children using wheelchairs are found

seated near the entrance door of classrooms while others are seen alienated and sitting in separate rows. Care needs to be taken to see that this seating arrangement does not make the child appear to be seated separately and away from the others.

The teachers in the school are well trained and seem to be motivated to work with the diverse school population. The female teachers have completed at least college education and the male teachers are graduates. In addition to their teaching work teachers work in the community and organize meetings at regular intervals. There are 15 teachers working in the school and draw a comparatively higher salary as compared to other NGO institutions. The teacher-student ratio is 1:30. UCEP uses its own books and materials which are prepared with due attention to the background of the learners. In addition the teachers also use the NCTB books. The teaching methodology is based on the active involvement of the learners. The only teaching aids observed in the school were some charts (vowels, spellings, pictures with alphabets in English and common occupations).

*"Inclusive practice has helped all children in the school. They have learned to be more tolerant caring and patient. There is a healthy give and take relationship among all the children. Children with disability are not seen as those who should be pitied and taken care of. The parents are happy with the progress of their children. Over the years we have helped them see how inclusion is useful for all."*

**Voice of a teacher**

Participation from children is encouraged. In order to promote involvement of children a student Executive Committee is formed with children as members. They are responsible for maintaining school discipline and making suggestions regarding the teaching process. The Student Executive Committee obtains opinion of other children regarding their likes and dislikes. One of the members of the Committee with a strong voice is a wheel-chair user. He has been elected by his classmates to represent them. There are 15 members in the elected Children's Council.

The involvement and support of the community is maintained by the teachers and the School Management Committees (SMC) is formed annually.

#### Issues/Questions

- It was observed that although the mobility of the children with disability within the school has been well organized, the immediate environment outside the school has a problem of accessibility. To enter the school one has to negotiate a low ditch, then a high mound, a railway track and a loose stone bed path. The wheelchair and the children have to be carried for quite a distance. Against such an immediate lack of accessibility, the facilities within the school are of limited use and the children are left with no option but to be totally dependent on the physically able children. How does this impact on the self-concept of the children? How will the situation be handled when children grow and gain weight and height? How can this situation be improved? Can the teachers mobilize the community in their meetings to work collectively and find a solution? Can the school authorities ask the local administration to intervene for improving the accessibility outside the school?
- There is a large number of children with disabilities in the classes. Classroom teaching based on active learning situations revealed limited participation from the children with disabilities. The total lack of participation from the intellectually challenged children particularly exposed the inadequacies. How can teachers be supported to work with all the children and elicit their participation?

- Inclusive education has received high acceptance by the community and peers as well as the disabled children and their families. There is a healthy give and take relationship that has been established among the learners and the teaching staff. There is a need to collate these experiences and document them for others to learn from.

This is an example of how to reach the marginalized but more reflection is needed on improving the quality of education for all children especially those belonging to the marginalized groups.

#### 4.1.3.2 UCEP's Technical and Para Trade Centres

UCEP's Technical schools provide training facilities for about 1700 students enrolled in 13 units of three technical schools in 3 cities. The duration of the training courses vary from 6 months to 2 years depending on trades such as automobile, welding & fabrication, machinist, electronics, electrical, refrigeration & air-conditioning, offset printing, industrial woodworking, garments etc. The technical schools run 2 shifts per day each of 3.5 hours.

#### 4.1.3.3 Efforts towards IE

##### 4.1.3.3.1 UCEP's Para Trade Centre

Some graduates of UCEP general education attend UCEP's Para-trade Centers in 7 centers in four cities. Here some non-conventional trades like embroidery, woodcarving, leather craft, tailoring, signboard & banner writing, screen-printing etc. are provided in a 6-month course. The centres run 2 shifts per day each of 3.5 hours.

- Placement in jobs and apprenticeships to a graduate of technical schools or Para trade Centres is a major focus of UCEP. The team was informed that the efforts for this include a survey of the job market, enlistment of prospective employers, job counseling for students, meeting and contacts with the employers, promotional activities etc. Two children with disabilities have recently been placed in the garment factory and are making small earning.

*"The school management should reconsider its policy of providing education to children upto Class-VIII and then providing training in para-trades. Many years are used in this process and many of us who want our children to help us economically find this wait too long".*

Voice of a Parent

- UCEP school management, supervisors and teachers, work with the parents. Encouragement and moral support is given to the families to enroll the children and continue through the various stages, while sustaining the earning

*The children with disabilities are interacting well. Some of them are leading their groups as the class monitors. In the group there are two children who are slow in understanding the instructions partner???. Though most children without disability are placed in jobs more or less routinely, this cannot be said about the children with disabilities. Generally the employers are hesitant and do not have the confidence in employing these children.*

Teachers Voice

activities, which are so important for the livelihood of the family. Where efforts are being made to meet the needs of children with mild and moderate disability along with other children. Most of the teachers are well qualified and trained. The trained and motivated teachers are in charge. Most are female teachers including the head teacher. Children are provided a small stipend (200 Tk.) during their skill-training period. This is provided in order to meet the expenses for the transport.

#### 4.1.3.4 Para Trade Centres

The Para-trade centre in Chittagong has Electrical (House Wiring & Decoration), Embroidery & Jari Chumki, Signboard & Banner Writing and Screen Printing. Like in the general school, there are a good number of 'Bihari' children learning various trades in this centre.

The Paratrade Centre in Mohammadpur, currently provides training to 64 children, of them 12 are children with disabilities( 3 girls and 9 boys). The students are trained in several trades. These include Embroidery & Jari Chumki, Signboard & Banner Writing and Screen Printing, Wood Carving, Leather Craft.

#### 4.1.3.5 UCEP Para Trade Centre Mohammadpur

Children with disabilities are identified from the community for which the staff from the Centre visits the community. Often more than one visit is required because parents are not willing to send their children as they do not accept the disability and have low expectations. Girls are hidden and their disability is not disclosed. Currently 13 (above it says 12 / repetition?) out of 64 children with special needs are in the Para Trade Centre in Mohammadpur. The teachers are well trained in their craft and have learnt by trial and error how to work with children with disabilities. Children receive training in small groups in separate classrooms. Boys and girls sit separately. Younger boys are seen seated with elder girls in the embroidery unit.

"The experience gained by working with the disabled children has given us the required confidence and we do not have any fears now". We have learnt to provide instruction in steps and use simple sentences, allow children to handle instruments, work together. Children help each other, and working in groups has proved to be useful in acquiring the new skills.  
**Voice of an instructor**

There is a friendly conducive environment and the children were seen working together in teams. The teachers reported seeing strong bonds of friendship between children with disabilities and others. The other children support the children with physical disabilities. Children themselves reported standing aside in the narrow corridors, and standing up in the class and pulling the chair in to make way for children using crutches. Wheel chair users are also provided the required support by the children as the building has poor access.

#### 4.1.3.6 Issues

- There is a need to provide training to teachers for working with children with special needs. The instructor finds the task of providing instruction difficult to the physically challenged children and those with hearing and speech difficulties simultaneously. They need to be provided with skills to handle children who have behavioral difficulties.
- The needs of an overweight hyperactive adolescent with no speech and drooling mouth are not being met. What was the basis of admitting the child when it was apparent that he could not acquire training in the existing structured environment with no trained staff?
- There is a need to provide better access and spacious classrooms.
- The management needs to consider introducing flexibility in the existing rigid 6 month training to learn a para trade. The teachers felt that there is sometimes need for some additional time to improve the existing skills acquired by the children and help them attain the required confidence to work independently.

- Interaction among children should be encouraged in such a way that there is a mutual give and take and a sense of independence is inculcated. All learners need to develop a positive self-esteem.
- The criteria for recruitment of teachers as regards the educational qualifications and experience should be clearly worked out so as to avoid overqualified / under qualified teachers joining the training centre.
- The Para Trade should be selected based on the job placement experience and choices made by the children. The sign board and banner making training does not seem to be popular as only 6% children had joined this training.

#### **4.1.4 Friends In Village Development Bangladesh (FIVDB)**

Friends In Village Development Bangladesh (FIVDB) is a national non-government organization and its main field activities are in the Sylhet Division – in the northeastern part of Bangladesh. One of its aims is to contribute towards educational and socio-economic empowerment of disadvantaged women, men and children.

##### **4.1.4.1 Efforts towards IE**

The Child Education Programme (CEP) began in 1985 as a result of a community's identified need. Originally FIVDB schools followed the traditional rote learning approach, its aim being to provide access to primary education for children of disadvantaged communities. Children were usually taught in large mixed age groups, rote learning from textbooks with no differentiation between them to cater for individuals needs. While children were learning information using this approach, it was found in a research study that they could not transfer their skills to areas beyond the situation in which they were learning. This was limiting their ability to extend their knowledge and skills independently.

As a result of these findings the programme developed and piloted an active curriculum (supported by the Department for International Development – DFID) to give children opportunities to test their knowledge practically and to participate in exploratory activities enhancing children's understanding of the concepts taught. Following the success of the pilot, this methodology was scaled up and implemented in all the FIVDB schools. A paradigm shift took place from a teacher-centred rote-learning model solely focused on teaching a curriculum to a child centred discovery-learning model designed to 'teach children. Creativity and individuality were encouraged and valued with many concepts taught practically making use of specially developed low cost resources.

Over the last three and half years the Active Learning Community Programme (ALCP) has expanded its activities from providing education for 6,330 children in 73 semi-permanent structured schools in 1999, to ensuring that 10,638 children (51% of whom are girls) receive quality education in 100 fully constructed schools. 228 teachers (49% female) run 428 classes in these schools. Child attendance in the schools has improved over the years maintaining an average rate of 84% for 2002. Student drop out from the ALCP schools has shown a remarkable reduction and currently the cumulative child drop out rate is reported to be 8.3%. Among these children 7% are reported to have migrated to other primary schools as their families have moved to different areas, whilst 1.3% have dropped out of primary education altogether.

The CEP has succeeded in incorporating new discoveries/practices in education to maximize the teaching and learning impact. It has succeeded in:

- Developing active learning supplementary guides to support all NCTB (National Curriculum Text Book Board) textbooks and competencies.
- Setting up Shishu Classes and developing suitable curriculum, materials and teaching methodologies. The children get time to build up early literacy and numeric skills while becoming familiar with expected classroom routines and practices in a friendly and supportive environment before they start the main Government curriculum in grade 1.
- Developing activities and teachers guides to support the children of Shishu class and classes I and II in Environmental Sciences for which the NCTB does not provide any textbooks.
- Developing resource materials including 20 supplementary reading materials, one big book, 3 Mathematics development handbooks and exercise books for Bangla and English language and Mathematics and lesson plan guides for the teachers in relation to all NCTB textbooks for classes I to V.
- Developed a comprehensive assessment system of children's achievement, comprising of formative and summative processes, for all NCTB competencies, which facilitates the tracking of each child's progress and enables the teachers to adapt their lessons to provide individual need based support.
- Develop and put in place an effective management and supervision structure with clearly defined job descriptions and accountability framework for each level/component of the programme from the field to the central levels.

#### 4.1.4.2 Observations

The Team visited a FIVDB school in Sylhet, observed classroom practice and had discussion meetings with the teachers and FIVDB supervisory staff, SMC members, parents and children. There is a general sense of pride among the teachers and the students about the well-constructed school building and hygienic conditions.

*"Our children enjoy coming to school and I think we have the lowest dropout rate of only 2% in the country. Children collectively are responsible for maintaining the school compound."*

**Teacher**

The FIVDB schools have distinct yellow coloured concrete building with red roofs. Each school has three classrooms, a corridor, a toilet (with running water) and a hand pump.

#### 4.1.4.3 Special Features

The school runs in two shifts. The first shift is of two hours duration for Shishu group (5+) and for classes I-II. The second shift is for classes III-V students. The day begins with a roll call. The school follows the National Curriculum and special care is taken to build an active learning environment promoting child participation. Care is taken to involve the community and it is mandatory to have at least two women members in the SMC.

In the Ghaterchote Primary School, Sylhet, inside the classroom children are seated on well-woven green colored mats. Each class had two plastic tables (light and sturdy) and light stools for organizing active group learning settings. The classrooms had well-painted black chalkboards with chalk sticks (sufficient quantity). Children's work (a product of different stages of group

interactions) was found displayed on strings hung across the room and was also put up on the walls. Alphabet, animal and number charts were also displayed and used by the class teachers.

The discussion with a teacher revealed that; the day begins with the attendance. Special care is taken to see that all children attend school regularly and children share this responsibility. Children's active cooperation is sought during teaching. The lessons are introduced and the children are asked questions. This helps the teacher to judge the knowledge of the children. One focus group and 2 non focus group activities of 25 minutes each are organized for teaching, reading, writing and math. In the higher classes the duration of the focus group activities is 40 minutes. Children are engaged in active learning tasks in groups in the non focus group activity time. Each class has attractive reading corners and time is allocated each day to encourage children to read books alone and collectively to each other.

Workshops are conducted regularly to train teachers to teach children in a participatory manner. The teachers think that though at present there is no particular effort to include the children with disabilities and other marginalised children, it is time to begin the efforts. They felt that with appropriate training inputs and opportunities to share experiences, special teaching materials, special curriculum and some minor adaptations in the school they can work with the children from the marginalised groups.

A discussion with the SMC (School Management Committee) members revealed that they were happy and proud to be associated with the school activities and found the training inputs arranged for them useful. There are 11 (2 women & 9 men) elected members that form the SMC. They receive training once a year.

The views of SMC members regarding education in general are:

- Children do not take a keen interest in their studies because their parents do not provide able support. Poverty in the village also is a contributory factor, though a lack of understanding about the advantages of education is a larger impediment.
- Some parents are not very enthusiastic about girls' education as they feel that educating them would not bring any direct return. They felt that this negative attitude rather than lack of safety was responsible for why older girls are not sent to school.

We like our school and take special care to see that all our friends come regularly. We look after the school well and keep it clean.  
I enjoy spending time reading books in our reading corner. My grandfather likes the stories I narrate to him in the evening. He is proud of my reading ability and tells all our relatives about it when they come visiting us.

**Children's Voices**

The SMC members felt that there are only a few children with disability (hearing and speech difficulties) in the area. However, many children are undernourished, often making them vulnerable to infectious diseases due to low resistance.

#### 4.1.4.4 Issues/ Questions

- FIVDB has made links with some mainstream schools to support the learning of children in the beginning of the primary cycle. How will this experience be jointly monitored and experiences culled out?
- How can FIVDB's experience of providing basic training on using active learning methods in the classroom to primary school teachers in the tea garden estate be utilized on a wider scale?

- Schools are organized into clusters and supportive supervision, problem solving sessions and follow up training is organized. How can this learning be shared and utilized by other schools?
- Children enjoy their time in the reading corner and read their storybooks some of them are developed from their own inputs, enthusiastically. What efforts can be made to see that there is a continuity of the reading at home? Can the school management set up some place where children can come to read and get books on loan for a short period?
- How can the reading material developed for and by the children be disseminated for use in the other schools? How can the books be enriched locally considering the cultural variations?
- How can teachers in FIVBD schools convince other teachers to adopt their methods of involving children in the learning process? The challenge FIVBD staff will face is to help teachers working in crowded classrooms and be motivated to adopt active learning methodology.
- What concerted effort can be made to change the existing attitude of parents as regards the education of their children especially promoting the education of older girls? How can the effort be supported?
- The school environment needs to be made more child friendly.

#### *4.1.4.5 Current Initiatives of FIVDB:*

The Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation is supporting FIVDB to pilot a comprehensive non-formal education programme in the low lying underserved areas of Sunamgonj District. The programme consists of basic education for children and adults as well as continuing education in health awareness, literacy, production and social life skills.

Within this programme primary education quality enhancement will be achieved by targeting government schools through community activation. Of the 10 villages covered by the pilot project children of 7 villages attend nearby government primary schools, whilst two project-managed schools cater for the need of the remaining three villages.

The school improvement activities will involve assessment of schools and pupils by the community members, and advocating with schoolteachers and Thana level officials to address the issues identified in order to improve the quality of education. The project-managed schools following the ALM and will act as quality education demonstration Centres while also meeting the needs of underserved children.

Save the Children UK/Sweden is developing partnership with FIVDB to pilot a Community Based Education Management Information System (C-EMIS), which anticipates involving the local government education authority as a lead partner in the implementation. The concept focuses on the community generated views and using education related data for local level problem solving, education planning, implementation and monitoring. The pilot will be carried out with a view to integrate the C-EMIS process into the system and improve the centralised EMIS of the GoB.

In spite of the improvements in enrolment in primary education, groups of children remain outside the existing education system due to lack of physical access and other reasons such as



poverty, gender, ethnicity, disability, family status etc. Whilst Bangladesh has succeeded in increasing the number of girls attending schools there has been little progress in addressing other reasons for exclusion. Out-of- school children will be tracked to identify the reasons for their non-enrolment and remedies for the phenomena.

Those children in school will be tracked to ascertain the environmental factors in schools, families and society contributing to enhancing the children's potential of completing the full cycle of education and achieving the identified competencies in a way that will enable them to make meaningful use of them in life.

How can the experiences be disseminated and the learning's utilized in promoting inclusive practice?

#### **4.1.5 RCI: Hard to Reach School (Lalbag, Dhaka City)**

The team visited the school in old part of the Dhaka City, as an example of 'Hard to Reach' Education project of DNFE in collaboration with UNICEF. Implemented in the major cities of the country the project aims at providing primary education to working children up to class four. RIC organized 105 schools, 60 of which were phased out after the students completed grade four.

The school visited in Lalbag is situated in a particularly difficult place of the city where the houses are old and dilapidated and the place is full of very narrow lanes, labyrinths and open drains. A narrow lane with open drain with sewage water on the side leads to the building with the school. It has a dark winding staircase, which is so narrow that it allows only one child at a time to climb-up. This situation raises the question – how safe are the children in such a school? In this building on the first floor is the small room with a low roof and two small windows. This rented room is the classroom of the RCI school. Adjacent to the classroom is another room in which a family of seven live. The lady of the house attends to her daily household chores during the school hours. The younger children in the family play outside and peep into the class and make noises. The loud interactions of the nearby families and the passer-byes in the lane are loud and affect the teaching and learning in the classroom. The school location is practically inaccessible for children with physical disabilities.

*We can go to a nearby primary school without difficulty or without creating any hardship on the family but we like this school better. Our teacher loves us and we want her to continue to teach us .*

**Voice of Children**

Most of children come from nearby Kamrangir Char- where many migrant families from villages have settled to seek for employment. They live in difficult conditions. Their families live in a rented single room houses with a common kitchen area, (20 families share a kitchen) community toilet and bathroom(2 bathrooms and 2 toilets for 20 families). Most of the adults and the adolescent boys work in the nearby make-shift factories and at other jobs. The adolescent boys are therefore, not in the school.

All the children attending the school were engaged in part time home based jobs, which helped them make small money to supplement the family income. The children revealed that most of them worked from home and were engaged in tasks such as stitching chumki (shining beads) on dresses (11 students), candy packaging (2 students), making paper packet (3 students), attaching lace to saris (1 student). On an average they earned a small sum of Tk.10 daily. Three girls studying in the school reported working as domestic helpers and one child was assisting his elder brother in a tea stall before and after school.

The school is a one-teacher arrangement with 2 hours contact time each day. Most of the children (72%) expressed their desire to continue with their education. Some of them expressed their doubt because of the circumstances at home, which made it necessary that they engage in some work to add to their parents' earnings.

According to the rules set by the school management street children, children from stigmatized families and children with disabilities should not be admitted in the school. The children talked about a classmate with poor vision. They mentioned that this child attends school irregularly and has particular difficulties in reaching school when there is not enough sunlight. He cannot see well in the dark or on cloudy days.

The children sit on the floor in two semi circles on pieces of plastic gunny bag sheets stitched together (which serves as mats). A small blackboard on the wall facing the children is the only teaching learning aid for the children. The teacher's belongings in the classroom include only a small bamboo rack and a chair.

The students are between 8-14 years, varying in height and weight. In the class of 25 (16B and 14G) the boys looked younger than the girls. This is probably because older boys are engaged in earning as apprentices to learn a trade. Most of the children observed were underweight and some had skin infections and head lice. Children come from poor families in the neighborhood. Tube well water is used for drinking purposes. The electric supply is erratic with hours of load shedding. Common ailments like diarrhea, vomiting, fever and skin diseases among children are mostly ignored. Only occasional families visit a Government doctor. Considering the existing living conditions and the lack of involvement of the parents, the low motivation of the majority of children in their academic performance is understandable.

*"I like teaching children in this school as the children are very affectionate and I am happy to be continuously with them for four years of their schooling. I know my learners, their strengths and weaknesses well."*

**Teachers Voice**

The discussion with the teacher revealed that absenteeism is high as many children are engaged in earning money and work overtime. The attendance during the rainy season is low as children avoid getting wet when walking to school without an umbrella or any other type of protection. The number of dropouts is high among the boys as compared to the girls. This is primarily because boys join small trades to learn the skills in a formal manner and require long hours of work. Often girls on the other hand continue to work from home and can attend school.

Only half the children in the class could write 5 simple sentences on "Myself" and solve addition sums (3 digit). The children wrote by placing the notebooks on the floor or in their laps. Most of children had only one or two notebooks and one textbook. Many children did not have pencils or erasers. All children carried their books in plastic carry bags.

The discussion with the children revealed that most of them came to school without eating their breakfast. During the school time the family serves children with drinking water adjacent to the classroom. A common tumbler is used by all children to sip of water for quenching their thirst.

#### *4.1.5.1 Issues/ Questions*

- There is a need to shift the school to a better place as the present place has poor access, is too small and has a high rent.

- The classroom environment needs to be made child friendly. There is a total lack of teaching aids in the classroom. There is a need to make it colorful and bright by displaying children's work. Meaningless posters "Population control and future targets", "Meeting the challenges of Aging" need to be replaced.
- The lack of teaching aids can be met by preparing low cost teaching material by involving the learners, who have well developed eye hand coordination skills because of the type of part time work they are doing.
- There is a practice of asking the same two children to perform for visitors (singing a song, recite a poem). Is it an appropriate activity to ask children to engage in? Do the children like to perform?
- Children seem to have a strong bonding and are aware of each other's needs. These feelings can be built on to promote the use of active learning and child-to-child methods.
- Teaching learning needs to be made participatory and meaningful for the children and linked with earning a decent livelihood.
- Care needs to be taken to weave into the curriculum, the aspects related to maintaining good hygiene and healthy eating.



Inclusive environment needs to be prepared with care

*" I know one of my friends has a missing finger in the right hand. She works in the factory, which makes sugar from sugarcane juice. She lost her finger in an accident while working on a machine".*

*I help my classmate by reading to him. He can read only the headings of chapters or big letters/ numbers".*

**Children's Voices**

#### **4.1.6 Shoishob Bangladesh**

Shoishob started activities with street children in Dhaka and expanded into areas of child domestic workers. Its education program includes the following:

##### **4.1.6.1 Street Children's program**

The aim of the program is to provide the children with basic literacy and numeracy, to equip them to deal more effectively with the negative realities in their life and to empower them. Shoishob works with street girls as a special group.

##### **4.1.6.2 Child Domestic workers' program**

The domestic workers form a big group in the urban areas and review of existing literature indicates a majority of them being girls. An estimate arrived at by Shoishob Bangladesh, through a survey, shows that the city has a total of about 80,000 domestic workers and about 70% of them are girls. Most of them are full time resident in the employer's households. They are on duty throughout the day and often work till late night. Their movements are strictly restricted by the employers and therefore any educational initiative can be planned only with the latter's agreement and permission. This many a times needs a lot of motivation.

Shoishob Bangladesh runs 102 such schools in the city working with some 3000 children. Basic primary education is given through NFE learning Centres organized in various localities.

#### *4.1.6.3 Observations*

The Team visited a child domestic workers programme in Mohammadpur area of Dhaka city. This school conducts its classes in the covered entrance area of an apartment building, by the courtesy of the owner. A fan has been installed by the owner of the house as his personal contribution to the school. Children sit on the floor in a semi circle facing the teacher. A small blackboard placed on a chair is all the teaching material that the teacher has at her disposal.

Most of the children belong to families who were forced to migrate because of river erosion in the village. According to the school records no child from the ethnic minority community has been employed. Very few children continue their education in mainstream school. The ordinary school resists taking these children, as most of them are overage. Hence, the project may be a step forward to promote EFA and may not be called 'inclusive' as such. The children face a negative attitude and most of them are looked at with disrespect.

Female teachers are employed to provide basic education to the children. In addition to their teaching work they also work in the community and have gone from home to home convincing families to let their domestic help attend school. 60% of the employers approached in the current year were willing to send these children to attend school. The permission was granted because the employers felt that formal training makes the children more useful for them. They become more efficient in keeping small accounts, noting telephonic messages and paying bills. 10%-15% were however not ready to send the domestic helper to the classes and rest of the employers are still undecided. The community workers (teachers) also identified 8-10 cases of children who were physically abused. Most of the employers however were found to treat their domestic help well. For some employers these children were like companions who worked for them and also played indoor games with them (Carom board, Ludo etc.).

The domestic helpers were provided 10 days leave after Eid. Some free time was granted during the day for them to watch television or have conversation with their age mates. The employers prefer to employ children under 10 as the salary they need to pay is lower for this age group. According to them children at this age are more obedient and worked without questioning. Further, these children are employed to look after infants and young children as they provide good care and company.

The students seem to enjoy their time in school as they get an opportunity to be with their own age mates and away from the drudgery of work. Discussion with students revealed that compared to other working children they felt that they were well fed and in better health and had the shelter of a home. The children lack freedom, and have to miss classes occasionally when there are guests or they cannot finish their chores. The children found washing of clothes a difficult task. The arrival of untimely and unwanted home guests, who often stayed for a long time, was also considered to be problematic.

Only 2/3 of the children attended class regularly. Most of the employers felt comfortable about sending the domestic helper for their classes as the classes were held close to their houses. They felt reassured as they could call them back to work any time. Most of the children came from nearby household (3 minutes walks).

The curriculum is based on the national curriculum. An emphasis is given to teaching through real life stories and is based on issues related to their life. Children are made aware of their rights and how employers should treat them. An employers' meeting is held once in a month. The teachers visit the employers' homes and discuss the child's progress and seek their opinion. Some children received help in their studies by the employers (while watching TV) while in some cases the older children of the family provide help.

It was found that children who attended the classes became more confident and began to think about their future. The employers also become more careful after sending the children to school. Children look at the learning in the classroom as a means of moving ahead in life.

#### *4.1.6.4 Issues/ Questions*

- Consultations need to be carried out with the employers and the guardians of the children, to change their attitudes towards the children and promote their education for a better life.
- The interactions in the learning settings should encourage children to express their feelings freely and voice their concerns. This is essential, as many children may not get this opportunity in their working set-ups.
- Teachers need the skills to use participatory methods and work with mixed age groups in a common learning setting. They also need the skills to work with adolescent boys and girls and understand their needs.
- The curriculum needs to address the assessed needs of the domestic workers and gradually build their skills to promote their joining the mainstream schools.
- Children need to be encouraged to maintain good hygiene, avoid contagious diseases and consumption of contaminated or stale food (sometimes served to them by employers).
- Children need to be made aware of their rights and how to protect themselves against any form of abuse.
- The teaching learning environment needs to be improved drastically and made child friendly.

#### *4.1.7 Bangladesh Protibondhi Foundation (BPF)*

BPF is a voluntary organization working for the assessment, diagnosis, education and rehabilitation of children and adults with disability. Among its various development projects and services for the disabled, education features prominently. BPF runs an inclusive school, "Kalyani" at Mirpur, Dhaka City. Children with intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, speech and communication disorders, and hyperactivity attend the school along with other children from the neighborhood.

I found it extremely challenging initially to accommodate my teaching pace with the varied groups of children I work with. I have learnt by sharing my fears and success with my fellow teachers. I plan in advance and do a lot of introspection and above all being flexible has proved to be very helpful. I listen to my children talk and I learn a lot about their learning preferences and their likes and dislikes.

**Voice of a teacher**

The school provides non-formal education from pre-school level to grade 5. Most of the teachers have Masters' degree in psychology and Bachelors in special education. The school has made attempts to provide access to children with mobility difficulties and small ramps and walking rails have been built. There is a warm and friendly relationship among the children. They share a healthy give and take relationship. Care is taken to maintain a happy and relaxed atmosphere

in the school. Children with difficulties in learning were seen seated in the front row, close to the teacher.

The classrooms are small and children and teachers cannot move freely. Children sit on benches and share common working tables. Wheelchair users sit near the door. The teachers interact from the front of the classroom standing next to the blackboard. Children's work is displayed in the class and children take pride to point at their own and their friend's work. Children are given responsibilities in the class for winding up activities and

were seen putting back teaching aids. Participation is sought from the children during the teaching learning process. Only a few children seated in the front rows were seen responding to the questions asked by the teacher.

The teachers felt the lack of parental interest in the children's progress was a major difficulty. Some children who came from single parent families needed special care and were irregular in attending school. Many children from poor families dropped out of school after a few years of schooling in order to earn and supplement the family earnings.

I like all my classmates and my teachers in the school. I hate to miss school. When we play in the evening, I argue with those who tease my school friend who cannot talk as well as we can. They do not believe me when I say that he studies with me in school and is doing well in his studies. He only takes a little longer to communicate and we have to listen to him patiently. I wish they would start respecting his feelings and caring for him. He often helps me with my work in school.

**Voice of a Student**

#### *4.1.7.1 Issues/ Questions*

- The physical surroundings need to be improved to allow easy access to children during the rainy season. The hand railings need to be periodically checked to ensure their sturdiness.
- A large number of children drop out of the school in grade 4 and 5. Collective discussions with school, and community need to be organized for exploring ways to retain these children in school and provide them meaningful learning environments and promote vocational skills.
- The small size of the classroom and fixed position of the blackboard restrict the teacher's movement.
- Children's interactions are joyful and learning is in a relaxed environment. Children are learning to live with differences and respect each other. This is valuable for life and should be utilized to change existing attitudes.
- There is a need to seek parental participation in the learning process of their children and for them to value the learning in the school. Ways need to be explored to seek their feedback and build the required awareness on a continuous basis.
- Improving the quality of teaching learning and promoting children's active participation needs to become an ongoing effort of the school. What existing human and material support can be made available needs to be explored with care.

#### *4.1.8 Hicare School for Speech & Hearing Impaired Children*

Hicare, is a Society for hearing impaired children and is running 10 schools in the country. These institutions provide early intervention and training to children with hearing difficulties. The aim is provide early intervention. A formal assessment of the hearing capacity of children is done in the diagnostic centre and intervention is provided in the childcare centre.

The Team visited one of these schools situated in Dhanmondi, Dhaka. According to the school philosophy children are to be mainstreamed in government schools after they are provided the

required training. 400(350 children have joined the pre-school and 50 class IV, V and VI) children have been mainstreamed in the ordinary school in the past 20 years. HICARE acts as a feeder school to the other schools. 43 children have been provided training in the field of computer.

According to the school statistics 80% of the children whose parents approach the institution have congenital hearing loss. The institutions provide home care programmes for children (2 and half year old) and there are plans to increase this service especially for children with moderate hearing loss. The unit also provides advice to parents and has prepared video programmes and pamphlets for building awareness in the community. HICARE is in a position to provide technical and academic training.

The institutions discourage the use of sign language. Picture charts are used to provide training. Children in the younger classes during the training sessions are seated on the ground facing the teachers in semi circles. Older children were found seated on chairs with a table (in the shape of horse shoe). The teachers sit in the grove created by the flat horse table. This allows good eye contact and children can lip-read each other and the teacher. Children are taught to take part in ordinary conversation as normally as possible through speech therapy, lip-reading and use of hearing aids. The teacher student ratio is usually 1:5. The teacher is very closely involved with the individual students engaging them in verbal communication during the education programme activities.

Children with profound hearing loss are also given continuous specialized training. In higher-grades education is also provided within Hicare School itself. According to the school policy ex-students comeback twice a year for hearing assessment and for the adjustments of hearing aids. For those who can afford the hearing aids the services are at a cost, while for others they are provided free of cost. The faculty also conducts training programs for teachers who teach in schools for speech and hearing impaired

#### 4.1.8.1 Issues

- There is a need for a close follow up after children join the mainstream school. The teachers need to be encouraged and provided the required onsite support.
- There is a need to carry out awareness programmes in order to sensitize the community regarding the possible causes of hearing impairment. Parents of children with hearing difficulties who have received training can be involved.
- Individual differences among children with hearing difficulties need to be considered with care. Children are never alike and should not be grouped and labeled.

The services provided by Hicare can be quite expensive— and that is one important barrier in their extension. Even where such services are available they cannot reach the needy because of the lack of awareness on the part of the families. The fact that most of the mild and moderate cases of speech and hearing impairment can be trained and mainstreamed is unknown to many. As a result they miss the opportunity to develop their limited abilities into fully functional ones, and relapse to silence and communication by gestures. 60% cases can have profound hearing loss. These children can also be helped through intensive therapy and permanent aids.

#### Voice of the Head of the institution

I am an ex-student and now working as a computer trainer in the school. I have enjoyed my training period and take great pride in working for my school. The employment has given me a great deal of confidence. My teachers and parents are proud of my achievement.

#### Voice of ex student

Parents do not know how hearing loss can be prevented. Most of them consider it to be a curse. The hearing aids are expensive and only a limited number of parents can afford the cost. **We rely on donations and about 40% children benefit from them.** There is a need to conduct assessment of the hearing levels of children twice in a year. The needs of the children who have hearing difficulties are big but there are only few institutions.

#### Diagnostic Centre Teacher

- Teachers need to be trained in simple functional ways of assessing children's hearing difficulties and make appropriate classroom adjustments.
- Children with hearing difficulties need to be given an opportunity to express their pent up feelings regularly.

#### **4.1.9 Boat school for Bede Children (Grambangla Unneyon Committee)**

The Grambangla Unneyon Committee (GUC) is an NGO, which is mainly working for the research and development of the Bede community in Bangladesh. It is currently engaged in project activities in the community. The education of the children in the Bede community has been particularly emphasized. The action research has involved planning mobile schools on boats, which accompany particular Bede flotillas. A boat school in Munshigong district has been particularly mobile and the teacher usually gives information about their new location to GUC management through mobile phone calls from the local phone shops.

Another intervention through the action research project has been to provide training on entrepreneurial capacities to the community. These include training in literacy, simple calculation and accounting, business planning and developing skills in sewing, poultry farming, and block and batik printing.

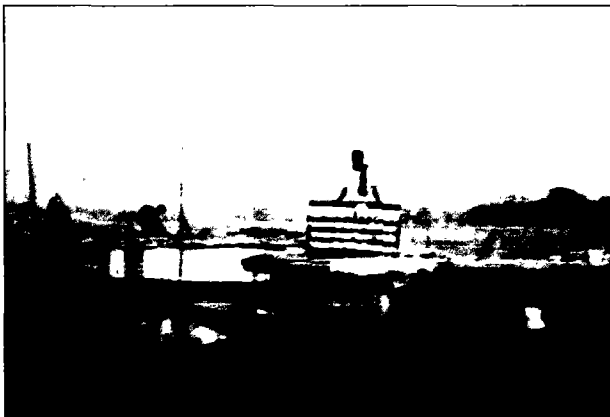
GUC has organized interventions for the Bede Communities. One of these is a floating school on a boat near Aminbazar at the outskirts of Dhaka City. The team visited this boat school.

This is for a flotilla of 'Bede' community, which moves about in the nearby water body. The mobile school has been planned in order to provide the required continuity in the education.

##### **Our Boat House**

Our small boats are divided into three parts and our parents use one part, and the children another and the third part is used for cooking and keeping the pots and pans and clothes. We wash and bathe in the river water. We have no toilets and use the river. Some of us cross the road and use the toilets in small sheds with big holes in the ground.

**Voice of a child**





Discussion with the GUC staff indicates that there are about 50 primary school aged children in the flotilla of 35 boats and none of them are enrolled in the primary school in the area. Older children are already helping with the usual *Bede* occupations, moving from place to place to sell items (trinkets, bangles, beads etc.), finding out valuables lost in water, traditional *Bede* healing (applying ‘Singa’) etc. Child marriage is very common among the young adolescents.

#### ***Boat School for Bede Children***

The Boat School operates in the morning hours between 6.30 and 8.30 in the morning. The proximity of the boat school to the boats where children live is helpful in ensuring high attendance. The school visited by the team is in a boat with a tin roof. The access to the boat is by climbing on a very narrow ladder one end of which is on the bank and the other on the boat. Inside the boat pictures of food items, animals, birds and alphabet charts are displayed on the tin walls. Children were seen seated on polythene mats spread on the floor of the boat. Many children had their younger siblings with them. The girls were seen dressed in colorful clothes wore trinkets and had make up on their eyes and lips. The boys on the other hand were poorly dresses and barefoot. Some of the children looked malnourished, had scabies and head lice.

The children were full of jubilation and when asked by the teacher enthusiastically read from their books for the visitors. The level of literacy varied among the children. The textbooks were in black and white, had few illustrations and were printed on poor quality paper. The teacher teaching the children was from the community and had education up to grade seven.

The children can complete three years of schooling in the boat school. The scope for mainstreaming these children in government primary schools seemed bleak. *Most of the parents when talked to, expressed fear of sending their children to the mainstream school because of the busy road with heavy traffic that the children had to cross. They also voiced concern about the likelihood of the children being ill-treated by the teacher and other children.*

Discussion with children revealed that most of the youngsters do not want to continue with their parents’ profession as they consider it hard work in the sun. We want to become teachers, doctors, officers and automobile mechanics. The girls have ambitions of working in the garment factory and as nurses.

A discussion with the teachers revealed that the livelihood pattern of the Bede community holds the children back in the education because their parents are always on the move. In addition there is a stigma attached to their profession and community. The educational status of this community is very low and it is a difficult task to find teachers who can provide them with uninterrupted education.

#### ***4.1.9.1 Issues***

- Most of the families want at least one child to follow their profession.
- Pre-school education planned to suit the life style of the Bede community will be useful to motivate children and parents to send children to regular schools.
- Most children lack the required parental support to study in mainstream schools.
- Children belong to poor families with high illiteracy and need to be encouraged to join school.
- Women work hard all through the year while men are seasonal workers.
- There is a need to change the perceptions of the community towards the Bede community.

## 4.2 Government Primary Schools

The Team visited Government primary schools in Chittagong, Dhaka and Savar (with children of Bede community)

### 4.2.1 Government Primary School, Jhautola, Chittagong City

A concrete two-storeyed building built sometime back as a cyclone relief centre is the school building of the Government Primary School, Jhutola, in Chittagong City. The ground floor has concrete floors and open spaces protected with a railing. A broad staircase leads up to the classrooms on the first floor. The approach to the school and the surroundings are rough and uneven and can pose problems especially during the rainy season for some children with physical difficulties. These surroundings and the lack of a ramp make the school inaccessible for wheelchair users.



The school runs in two shifts (Shift I- 7.30 A.M. to 10.00 A.M. and Shift-II 10.15 A.M. to 12.15 P.M.) The number of students in the baby class (3 years – 5 years old children) is 140. Only one teacher is looking after their needs. Classes I-III have two sections each. The class wise number of students is 100 children (Class I), 50 children (Class II) and 45 children (Class III). Class IV and V have one section each with 56 and 35 children respectively. No proper records are maintained as regards the number of children who dropout of the school. The school does not demand birth certificates or any transfer certificates.

The classrooms have windows and are well lit. The school furniture consists of long writing tables and benches (4-5 children sitting on each bench). Girls and boys are seated separately. Three to four girls sit cluttered up on one bench. The boys tend to enjoy a comfortable seating of two to a bench. According to the school norms wearing a school uniform is compulsory. Parents are required to buy the school uniform. The school provides monetary help in cases where parents cannot afford it but to only a limited number of children.

Each classroom has a big blackboard. The teacher stands in the front, next to her/his table or sits on a chair while teaching. The activity in the classrooms was seen to be primarily teacher directed. Children listen to the teacher, follow the text in the book, answer questions and do the written exercises as directed. They are engaged with the learning task as passive learners. The blackboard and the textbooks are the only teaching aids used by the teacher. The school has some teaching learning material aids (compass, magnet, three dimensional models, geometrical shapes, meter scale, abacus and number, alphabet charts) lying unused on the cupboards in the head teacher's room.

There are 2 male and 4 female teachers in the school. The male teachers have higher educational qualifications as compared to the female teachers. The PTI conducts cluster level in-service training once in 2 months. It is a one-day training programme aimed at improving teaching learning methodology. The schools are selected in rotation as venue. The discussion with the teachers in Chittagong Primary School revealed that no replacement teachers are available to fill

the gap of those teachers who attend cluster level in-service training. It results in an additional teaching load on the teachers who do not go for the training. The class size becomes unmanageable and the quality of teaching suffers.

Discussion with the school staff revealed that the supply of books to schools is delayed in the rural areas. The number of books supplied is limited and children are expected to pass them on to the next group. Schools are provided with a needle and thread to stitch the used torn books and recycle them.

*No attempt is made to base the training on the problems faced by the teachers during the teaching*

***Voice of a teacher***

Teachers are often drawn out from school by the Education Officers for duties such as preparation for the visit of a dignitary. The teaching suffers, as there is no provision of a substitute teacher.

***Voice of a Head Teacher***

The students appeared to be talkative, happy and vibrant. Discussion with children revealed that girls occupied the first eight positions based on academic performance in class 4. It is an indication that the girls are doing well and this interest level should be maintained and steps taken to see that the advantage is carried forward in the later years.

Scholarships are awarded to children on the basis of a local exam at the end of Class- V and Class-VIII. Out of the 10 scholarships in the current year 8 were awarded to girls while 2 were given to boys. The records revealed that the overall performance in the last school exam in Class V was found to be better among girls than the boys.

In a classroom visited the teacher was teaching an English lesson from the textbook to children in Class V. The teacher asked children the following simple questions in English:

Where is your teacher?

Who is your best friend?

Where does your best friend live?

No child in the class could give the required oral responses to the teacher.

The teacher then asked them to respond to:

What is your name?

How old are you?

Where do you study?

The children gave their responses in a chorus and seemed to have memorized the answers. The head teacher revealed that 2% to 3% children are detained each year based on their low attendance and poor performance in academics.

A significant number of students are seeking help using paid private tuition at home. This fact and the reasonably well-dressed appearance (with school uniform, shoes and almost half the children in each class had school bags) and well-groomed look of children show that some guardians are prepared to use some of their resources for the education of their children. This keenness needs to be built on to further the educational attainment of children in the school.

In the visit to Chittagong Government primary school, the team met a girl from the Chakma ethnic minority community studying in class 4. She came across as a well-dressed child doing well academically and greeted visitors with grace radiating self-confidence. She is the class monitor and interacts with her classmates with poise and commands authority. She also helps the teacher in maintaining a congenial environment in the class. She belongs to an educated family and her father is a government servant serving the railways. Her mother is a teacher in a private school.

The head teacher reported having 3 children with disabilities (difficulties in hearing and speech and physical movement). There are 11 members in the School Management Committee. The head teacher says, "I have to put in a lot of effort to ensure that the SMC members attend the monthly meetings. Their contribution is limited. I am keen to raise issues where their help can be very useful. If we jointly approach the local authorities we can probably find solutions to the lack of running water in the school. Another issue worth deliberating upon is the low attendance of children in the school in the lower primary grades.

There is a lack of proper water supply in our school. Since I am the class monitor, I go to the principal's room daily to submit the attendance records. I open the cupboard and take a sip of water from the water bottles stored there. My classmates remain thirsty most of the day. We do not like to sit for too long in our class as our seating arrangement is uncomfortable. There is a lot of noise and disturbance on days when our teacher is absent as no other teacher takes our class. We often leave the school early on such days.

**Voice of a Child**

#### 4.2.1.1 Issues/ Questions

- The Chittagong primary school, though located next to a major sweeper colony of the city, does not have any child on roll from that community.
- No records of the school mapping and house-to-house child survey (under taken a year ago) are available in the Chittagong primary school.
- The open space on the ground floor could be used for organizing games, teaching and learning activities.
- The interval between the two shifts is only 15 minutes. The opinion of teachers can be sought on whether they feel the need to increase the interval and accordingly changes can be introduced.
- How can school records be maintained properly to help plan interventions for children realistically? Why are transfer certificates not made mandatory? Why do schools not maintain records of children who were enrolled but are not attending school regularly?
- How can we enthuse motivation and a sense of ownership among SMCs?
- How can we use the 'Child Survey' information collected every two years meaningfully?
- Can we redirect resources in a way that we can avoid the recycling of textbooks?
- Can we allocate/ make available some small amount of money for the preparation of appropriate teaching learning material?



Class room of a primary school where 329 students are enrolled.

*Courtesy Els Heijnen*



The same primary school, which was built also to serve the purpose of protection from cyclone in the coastal area is now in a very vulnerable stage and can collapse any day.

*Courtesy Els Heijnen*

- Can we adjust in-service training sessions during holidays so that the teaching in the schools does not suffer? However this needs to be done by asking teachers their preference. We should not forget that teaching is a demanding profession and teachers need time off to take a break.
- How can we base the in-service training content on difficulties that teachers face?
- How can we facilitate the use of teaching learning aids that are available in schools? Can we include sharing of ideas regarding the optimum use of teaching aids and other issues in in-service training courses?
- How can exchanges among teachers to discuss classroom issues be strengthened?

#### **4.2.2 Government Primary School in Jhingatola, Dhaka City**

The Government primary school was selected as a pilot school in the UNICEF assisted IDEAL project. It is one of the five selected MWTL schools (Multiple Ways of Teaching Learning). This school has drawn a lot of attention and has been adjudged the best school in the recent past. According to the school records the school strength is 1165 (400-500 children coming from poor household and from families of leather workers and washer men). The school mapping conducted identified two children with intellectual impairments and one each with physical disability and hearing impairment. According to the school authorities these children were admitted, but soon dropped out due to parental negligence. Currently there is one child with speech difficulties studying in class II. In addition to the support provided by the school authorities the child's elder bother helps him in the academic work. Though the school is adjacent to a scavenger colony, according to the school records not a single child from the colony is in the school. This is a clear indication of the social stigma attached to this community.

The school attracted local contribution to its welfare fund, and has been in focus because of the various pilot development projects. Parents have a positive attitude towards education and support the school. A sizable fund (100,000 TK) has been collected as donations. This money is utilized for improving the quality of teaching and learning in the school. The funds have been used for paying the salary of the caretaker, distribution of prizes and scholarships, repair of school furniture, preparation of reading material, purchase of library books etc.

The school makes special efforts to ensure regular attendance and quality learning. The head teacher's room has a large display of the school mapping exercise. In particular the students of the Primary School in Dhaka expressed their desire to join reputed high school and were ambitious. Home visits are made by teachers to ensure that all children attend school regularly.

Multiple Ways of Teaching and Learning (MWTL) are used in the school. Training in this methodology was provided to teachers under the IDEAL project. According to the teachers it involves the use of role-play, singing, conversation, discussion, body expression (Kinesthetic), and using teaching aids etc. A three days training programme is organized for teachers at regular interval.

The classroom environment is colorful and lively (big blackboard, display of children's work and paintings with stories in sequence). The lower walls space is painted black too and children are encouraged to use it as their writing space. Active learning situations are arranged for children. Each class is helped to choose a topic and work in groups to plan a role-play situation once a week.

According to the discussion with teachers most of the children come from families working in the government offices. The parents motivate their children to learn and perform in school. One day participatory planning meetings (SMC members, PTA members and students from each class) are organized to discuss issues such as absenteeism and ways of promoting good teaching and learning.

#### 4.2.2.1 Issues

- There is a need to include children in the school from all marginalised groups including children from the severely stigmatized communities.
- Teachers should be provided opportunities to share their skills in cluster level meetings on a regular basis. In addition the parents and SMC members who are working closely with the school and are associated with the participatory meetings should also share their experiences.
- The role of the head teacher in introducing active teaching methods and motivating staff and parents for improving the school environment need to be recorded and disseminated.
- Efforts should be directed towards recording children's experiences of participating in the learning process and organizing role-play activities.

#### 4.2.3 Government Primary School, Porabari, Savar

##### *Savar Bede village*

The team met the Bede Community in Savar where the Grambangla Unneyon Committee (GUC) has been conducting the action research project. Savar Bede village is one of the 65 places in the country where there is a significant Bede settlement. A much bigger Bede community gravitates to this place from time to time. Normally there are some 375 households of Bede people in this Mantapara, (Bede call themselves Manta) Porabari areas of Savar. On Id-ul-Azha, (the second most important Muslim festivity), 12000 to 15000 Bede people congregate here and live in tents for months.

The team talked to 25 children from the Bede community and found that the parents of 7 children were earning a living as wandering snake charmer and a few (4) cross the borders of the country to pursue their profession. Seven parents practice traditional healing and five other parents are working as shopkeepers (betel-leaf shops), helpers in public buses, and as vegetable sellers. Most of the children want to study and complete their schooling in the Government Primary School in Savar. They aim for joining better professions than those being pursued by their parents. The children seemed happy with their schooling and do not feel any overt discrimination.

Discussions with some adults working as opinion leaders of Bede community within the GUC project however revealed that they have different views. They think Bede children are actually severely discriminated in the schools and their education would only thrive if they have their own school. 75% of the Bede community members here are traveling with the whole family most the time. Their nomadic habits prevent them from being in a school.

##### **Livelihood of Parents of Bede Children**

Shahriar's father is a traveling snake charmer, who catches and sells snakes to earn a living. He has been traveling and has been away from home for the past five months.

Majeda's father is not alive. Her mother is the only bread earner. She works in a local family as a housemaid.

Yasmin's parents are hawkers and sell small trinkets in the market place (in the evening) and also go around in colonies from door to door. Her elder brother is a snake charmer. Her elder sister's husband has a shop and sells music cassettes.

Nurul Alam's father is a snake charmer, and his mother is a traditional healer.

The team visited the local primary school in Porabari, Savar that enrolls a good number of children from the Bede community. According to the school enrolment records almost half the children are from the Bede community.

A discussion with the teaching staff revealed that only about one fourth of the enrolled Bede children attend the school throughout the year. More girls from the Bede community are enrolled in the school than boys as the later go with their parents to earn a livelihood. Most of the children attend school regularly only for short periods (about three months) and then remain absent for a long time. This affects their academic performance adversely. The teachers' assessments reveal that there is not much difference in the performance level of the Bede students who attend school regularly and the other children. Many children drop out of the school system because of the traditional occupations of the Bede community. According to the school staff only about 5% of them go on to high school.

The children are adversely affected because of general poverty and social stigma. Early marriage among Bede girls is common. Polygamy is visible and males may marry 3 or 4 wives. The families' size is big (on an average 10 children per family). Frequent divorces are also seen.

According to the teachers and head teacher the Bede children face no discrimination from teachers or other children. In fact all the children are very friendly and make no distinction among communities. Most of the children from non-Bede families also come from very poor households and have parents who earn their living by working as laborers, rickshaw pullers, shopkeepers etc. Most of the parents do not discriminate because they also are poor but it is widely perceived that the standard of household cleanliness is poor in Bede homes.

The school authorities felt that the supervisors and other administrators do not make an effort to understand the challenges teachers face because of mobility of the Bede families. There has been no attempt to understand why the school retention rate and the performances vary. The authorities do not realize that there is a need for extra textbooks as many Bede children lose them / or never return them due to the long absence from the school. The curriculum does not reflect the culture of the Bede community. There is a need for the administrative staff to discuss the unique challenges and collectively work on the possible solutions.

*"The children live in dirty unhygienic condition and do not value cleanliness. We have great difficulty in maintaining good progress since these children come to school only for short period. The education department directorate has never approached us to find ways of solving the problems of the Bede community."*

**Teachers Voice**

## **CHAPTER -5**

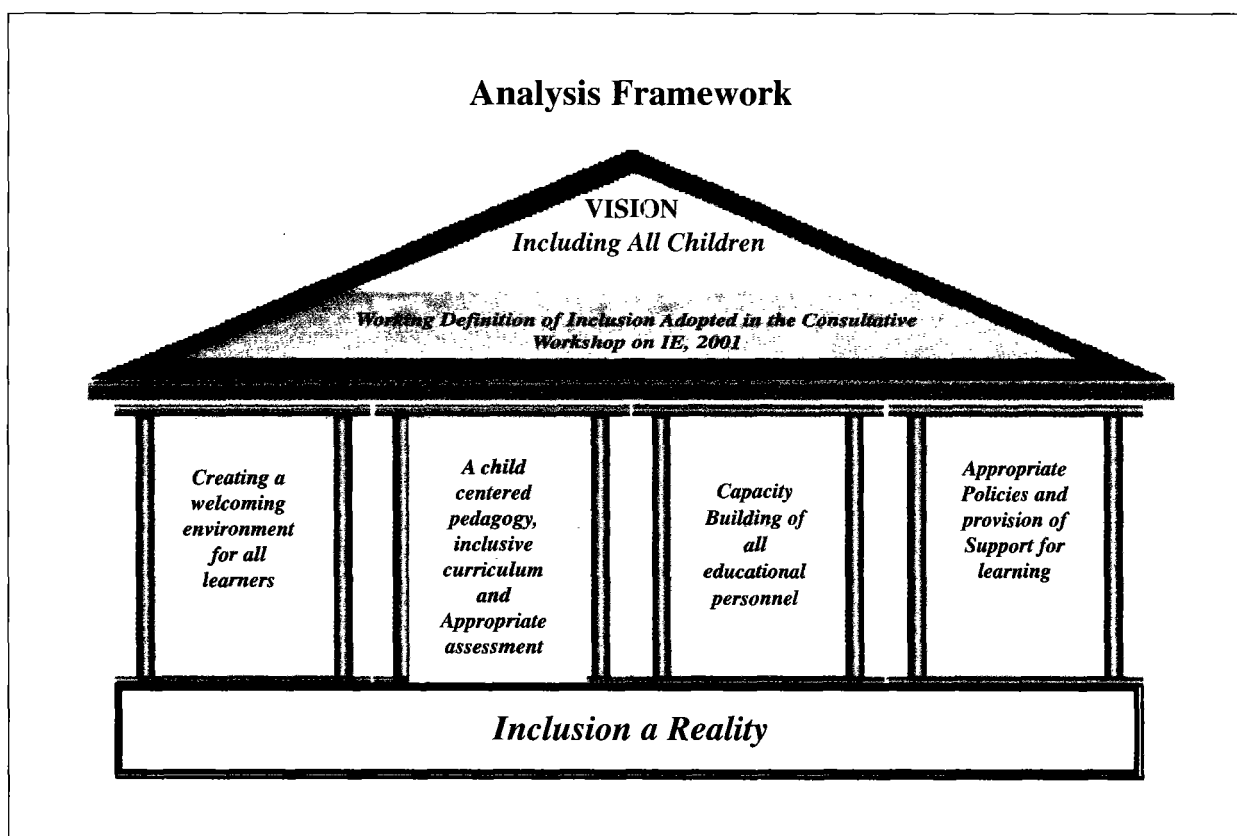
### **ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS**



## CHAPTER 5 : ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

### 5.1 Analysis Framework

The analysis of the current status of IE in Bangladesh has been carried out within the ambit of the working definition of inclusion as adopted in the Consultative Workshop on IE, 2001 (refer to chapter 2) and the basic principles of inclusion:



A collaborative methodology, consisting of discussions with various stakeholders during field visits and deliberations in the national seminar, was adopted to analyse the situation of IE in Bangladesh.

This chapter describes the findings for promoting IE in Bangladesh based on the analysis of key observations with respect to:

- overall issues,
- different marginalised groups,
- expressed opinions of stakeholders, and
- strengths, opportunities and weaknesses/constraints

## 5.2 Overall findings

Bangladesh has shown improvement in the access to basic education. The campaigns, the expansions and improvements of education facilities, and incentives by the government and NGOs have contributed to this accomplishment. The major groups who have benefited are girls and children from poor families. However cultural and social deprivation, especially for the girls continues to be a major barrier.

### 5.2.1 Concept of Inclusive Education as understood in the field

Inclusive education as a policy, concept and practice is at a nascent stage of development in Bangladesh. There are large gaps between theory and practice, and the country faces a challenge with the actual implementation of IE.

It was informed “*our schools are open to all children, so we are adopting inclusive education*”. However analysis of policies, functioning of the national curriculum board, training institutes/curriculum, observations of school settings, learners within and outside the school, classroom arrangements, availability of teaching-learning materials and teaching-learning processes point that this is not really so.

The mainstream school system support is not well equipped to meet the varied needs of all learners. There is limited accountability to see if all children are in school or to see which children are not in school.

Inclusive education is primarily understood in context of children with disabilities alone and within this too, children with intellectual impairment are not seen as ‘educable’.

Many groups of children with difficulties continue to be out of mainstream formal education.

### The least served

The benefits have not reached all marginalized sections uniformly. The exclusion has often a social, financial, ethnic and lingual base. Groups remaining ignored in education, are children from ethnic and linguistic (do not speak Bangla) minorities, children of ‘bede’ (boat gypsies), street children, children with severe social stigma (e.g. sex-workers’ children, children from sweeper community), working children, domestic helpers, and physical and intellectually challenged children.

Political and social reasons have been primarily responsible for the efforts taken towards inclusion of girls and children from poor homes. However, the reach of the inclusion has stopped short of many other groups who deserve equal attention. This is perhaps because these groups are smaller in number

Theoretically schools are open to ‘All Children’ but in practice many children continue to remain excluded/discriminated:—With severe social stigma (e.g. sex-workers’, children from sweeper community)

- From the ethnic and linguistic minorities,
- Children of ‘bede’ (boat gypsies),
- Street children, working children, Domestic helpers,
- Physical and intellectually challenged children.
- And many more.....

The reaction of a Government school teacher to What if a child from the brothel wanted to join your school was: “Oh! Gosh goodness gracious what ARE YOU SUGGESTING TOBA TOBA” ; TOUCHING HER EARS! “No this will create a hurricane”

“Children with disabilities need to be taught in separate schools as other children will make fun of them and are likely to imitate their manners and behaviour. Special separate schools need to be set up as there is a social stigma attached to children with disabilities”

( Voice of Administrator)

and their visibility is less though there may also be other reasons. They include, for example the physically and intellectually challenged children who usually remain hidden rather than participating in the activities with other children. There are other groups of children, which also remain isolated usually among their own kind for various reasons. The ethnic minorities are isolated and discriminated for their language, culture and different life style. This is mixed with preconceived negative ideas, and in some cases even historical attitudes as in the case of children belonging to the 'Bihari' families. Street children have to live rough on their own and are devoid of care by parents or by anybody else for that matter. Hereditary sweepers both adult and children are virtual outcasts living in their own colonies while providing their very essential cleaning services. Sex workers are also treated as outcast of a different kind, the stigma fully affecting their children. Confined to their own 'districts' they seem to have little chance of inclusion in schools or society. The 'Bede' families with a gypsy like life style, always on the move pose a threat to continued schooling of their children.

Though the assessment was limited by its coverage of institutions/ programs focusing on these groups, there are other marginalised groups (See box) who need attention. Their exclusion from education does not seem visible to many, and the theme is neither a popular issue, nor does it seem to be a priority in the general scheme of things.

### 5.2.2 Governance/Planning/Policy

The National Education Policies in Bangladesh have not adopted inclusive education. The recent Education Policy 2000 also does not include any guidelines to either address or facilitate inclusive education.

#### SOME OTHER MARGINALISED CHILDREN

- Children affected by HIV
- Children affected by conflict or natural calamities like cyclones
- Children from fishermen
- Children in jail or correction centre
- Child victims of trafficking
- Refugee children
- Children living in coastal areas
- Child victims of drug addiction
- Child victims of river erosion
- Children engaged in hazardous work
- Village children
- Children in orphanages
- Children living in slums
- And many others

There seems to be lack of coordination and inter-linkages among the existing ministries such as the Ministry of Social and Tribal Welfare, Ministry of Special Affairs, Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracks and others on issues related to the education of marginalised groups.

The role of the Planning Commission is to review plans and proposals, submitted by the various ministries (Tribal Ministry, Ministry of Special Affairs, Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracks etc.) The Planning Commission does not seem to ensure that the proposals are inclusive in character and focus on the needs of the marginalized groups of children but focus on aspects like budgets and finances.

There is a lack of reliable and consistent data on the magnitude and educational status of marginalised children. The Education Management Information System (EMIS) looks at children in

#### Adopting Inclusive Education- Practice

- Policy Document is still suggesting special education programmes, and has not specified any guidelines for IE
- Education for all children not under one ministry
- Lack of inter-linkages between different Ministries
- Planning Commission role restricted to approving budgets and finances of proposals
- The current teacher training programmes are not focussing on IE at pre/in service levels
- The mainstream school system is not seen as accountable nor is it supported for providing for all children
- Information is collected only about children in school, and often does not analyse why children do not attend, drop out prematurely or are not enrolled
- Lack of collaboration among most NGOs that are rapidly increasing in size and budgets but may continue to have a narrow focus and often lack collaboration with government.

school, and thus misses out on all school-age children who are not in school. The national EMIS does not analyse why children do not attend regularly, drop out prematurely or are not enrolled. Neither does the national EMIS look for more decentralized context specific education situations and obstacles prevalent in various districts. This makes it difficult for policy makers and programme planners to understand the nature of problems and plan meaningful interventions.

The educational activities for the marginalized sections taken up by government and non-governmental organizations seem to be limited to exploring ways of developing a ‘partnership approach to interventions’. Programmes developed in isolation may not succeed in improving the quality of education for significant numbers of children in the long run.

### 5.2.3 Attitudes/participation

Attitudinal barriers were seen at all levels – from policy makers, to implementers and users. There is a general lack of participation and ownership of the community though programmes plan for formation and involvement of SMCs.

In addition, the programmes do not seem to foster accountability to the beneficiaries by promoting their participation and support so as to ensure sustainability.

Among the subjective factors the traditional social norms and parental attitudes and beliefs in term of hopelessness have also been potential barriers to inclusion, especially of children with disabilities, children of sex-workers and children from hard-core poor families. Maybe rephrase this para in 2 shorter sentences

#### Adopting Inclusive Education: Attitudinal Barriers

*“Children Ethnic minorities and identified children of sex workers and children who come from colonies of scavengers, should study in separate schools. They are the children from extra ordinary families. We do not want our children to learn wrong habits from them. Most street children are sons and daughters of rickshaw pullers/ domestic workers or daily workers.” (Parent)*

*“Children are included in the school system on the basis of their capacity to respond. Since children with Mental retardation and Hearing Impairment cannot respond they are not taken in (Head Teacher)*

*An example was quoted about how one teacher with physical disability (polio in one leg.) has been selected as primary school teacher by default.*

*- The view held (without any discussion with the teacher is): “Teacher has to be physically able. How will he control the children and run after them? What role model is he going to serve for the children?” (Govt. Official)*

*“Sex workers do not value education and do not send their children to school. The male children of the sex workers suffer more and their mothers do not know what to do with them. Girls can follow the mother’s profession but not boys” (SMC member )*

### 5.2.4 Quality of Education

While some planned inclusive arrangements provide reasonable accessibility they lack in providing appropriate learning opportunities. The lack of required skilled and trained personnel for supporting inclusive practice is a major barrier to facilitate the education of marginalized groups.

The needs of marginalised groups (like Hill tribes) vary and are based on remote and difficult locations with different styles of livelihood. The limited sensitivity and non-recognition of their linguistic and cultural needs and often outright negative attitudes and discriminations in mainstream society are also reflected in education. It is pointed that the mother tongue is different from Bangla and therefore language acts as a barrier for many groups.

Most of the interventions by the NGOs for the education of ethnic minorities concentrate on exclusive minority schools, rather than inclusive ones, that would both teach in mother tongue languages and in Bangla. There were no examples seen of developing supplementary books (to be used as additional primers) in the ethnic language using Bangla script.

#### 5.2.4.1 Children in and out of school

The analysis of field observations revealed that children were not in school because of many reasons other than poverty. Some parents did not see a purpose in educating their children and how it would benefit or improve their life. Schooling was not considered important for earning a livelihood. So though the children wanted to be in school the parents thought otherwise.

Some children in school found the struggle to continue not worthwhile as they were made to repeat grades. For some, the school was too far away to reach. Some found playing in the fields during school time a much better option, as school had become a miserable place where you were being shouted at/ beaten / or got into trouble because of your poor performance.

There were others who were sitting in class but were not really a part of the teaching-learning environment. They felt left out because of various reasons. Some did not understand the language used by the teacher as Bangla was not their mother tongue. The content of the books was neither related to their life nor to their environment and thus they did not find the learning meaningful or interesting. Some felt that the teachers had lower expectations from them because of their family background. Some could hardly see what was written on the blackboard from where they sat. Many did not like it when they were shouted at for not learning their lessons well at home. A child expressing her views said: *"The teacher does not seem to understand where is the time for studying as I walk back five miles from school and have so much work to do at home. I do not have the textbook as the old one given to me in school this year is now completely torn."*

These problems are clearly springing from the inappropriate policies and practices in schools rather than child-related problems. A rigid adherence to inflexible curricula and inflexible methodologies makes schools good learning places only for a few children. Traditional systems of education tend to increase the gap between advantaged, 'included' students and disadvantaged, excluded children. Middle and upper class children, who start out with more (in terms of opportunity, materials), also succeed in getting more from the traditional system, thus widening the gap in education and society between the 'haves and have nots'. Slum children, who start with less, are generally given less in terms of equal educational opportunities, thus propagating the vicious cycle of poverty and lack of opportunities.



Children crossing a hazardous make shift narrow pathway made of tree branches on the way to their school.

*Courtesy Els Heijnen*



Poor children have to walk over the muddy, narrow demarcation lines in between the agricultural plots to attend school everyday.

*Courtesy Els Heijnen*

### **Lata's unfulfilled desire**

**Lata's** parents live in the hill tracks of Chittagong and have six children. The three older children in the family could not go to school because their help was vital at home. They had to look after younger brothers and sisters, fetch firewood, look after the cattle and help in cropping work. For six months the family migrated to work as farm labourers convened by an NGO. They decided to send the younger children to school. Lata's schooling began at the age of 9 by default. She was sent to school because someone had to accompany her younger brother to school. Lata enjoyed her time in school and laboriously tried to learn Bangla. The teacher did not speak her mother tongue. At the end of grade three her parents took her out of school at her aunts' insistence, who said, "she is of an age to marry and people should not see her at school with boys." Her younger brother, on the other hand was sent to school and expected to finish school and find a good job in Dhaka city. But the boy did not learn Bangla well and had to repeat two classes. Then the father took him out of school too. He announced one morning: "Don't go and waste your time in school, as you can be of more use at home than sitting around repeating classes at school." His father wanted him to learn how to work hard on the farm and grow crops like him. Unlike her brother Lata holds a hidden desire and says, *"I wish I could continue school. Unfortunately when my friends come back from school they don't have time to teach me as they have to do domestic work too."*

### **Abdul's unfulfilled desire**

**Abdul** till not too long ago was studying in the Government primary school in his neighborhood. Rehman Abdul's father is a tailor. Abdul started school at the age of eight. Even though he was attending the second shift he was often late to school, as he had to fix the buttons of shirts his father stitched and deliver his lunch box daily. He was often absent from school when his father had to deliver a large order. He could not keep up with the rest of the class. His teacher was teaching grades I-IV all together. Following the teachers instructions Rehman copied alphabets from the blackboard for a long time but was unable to put them together to make words. The teacher did not notice that he had poor hearing. His friends were aware about his limited capacity to hear and came close to him and spoke in a loud pitch. They would help him cross the road as he often missed the rickshaw pullers horns and was shouted at when he came in their way. At school he learned very little about his environment and his culture. This year during the rains, he often got drenched during the long walk to the school. He was absent from school for a month because he was down with pneumonia. When he entered grade three, his father found that he could not read the names of his customers on the bills. Abdul could only laboriously decipher a few letters. Then his father decided to take him out of school, and give his six-year-old younger brother a chance.

Obviously no child chooses to live at a distance, or to belong to a poor family or live with parents who are not literate or with those who do not seem to see the importance of education, or speak a language other than the medium of instruction in the school, or do poorly at school.

#### *5.2.4.2 Schooling and poverty*

Many parents also do not send their children to school because of the hidden costs in education, which they find difficult to meet. Over the last two decades, there has been a significant reduction of poverty in Bangladesh. Although it is difficult to delineate its impact on the condition of children at the macro level, inter-temporal village studies do point out that it has had its positive effect in reducing child labour and increasing primary school enrolment in the rural areas.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, as many studies show, it is under extreme conditions of poverty that children are abandoned or forced into back breaking labour or allowed to be taken out of the country under the pretext of obtaining jobs for them.

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<sup>6</sup> Siddiqui, KU (2000): Jagatpur 1977-1997: Poverty and Social change in Rural Bangladesh.

The team's observations and discussions with children revealed that children are enrolled in school in large numbers in the early years, many are over-age, but they drop out and rarely re-enter the system at a later date. Children who are enrolled in school do not always attend to complete the primary cycle. They may drop out because of their own illness or to take care of sick siblings or parents, or to work and help their families survive.

It could be argued that, even under the existing level of poverty equal educational opportunities could be provided to children provided there is a belief in the purpose of education. There is a need for strengthening the value and belief system, which upholds children as the most precious treasure of a society. Distorted interpretations of religion, the evil influence of the permissive media, breakdown of the family, drug addiction, and prettifying greed and jealousy in the name of capitalist profit maximization and competition, etc. have all contributed to the rise of extreme cruelty, selfishness and perversion in our value system in recent years. When children are sold to child traffickers, it is, therefore, not simply economic poverty but also the distorted values of parents/guardians, middle-men and the traffickers which are at work.

**Siddiqui KU 2001: Better Days Better Lives, UPL, Dhaka**

Many children at the end of their primary level schooling are unable to read and write and say they have learned things, which they do not remember well. Many children found the learning from books and writing tasks boring. Many elders in the community also felt that what children learn in school is rather unimportant for their future

Rather than recognized as the right of every child, education is too often seen simply as a 'good thing' for most children. As a result, while it is considered desirable to have as many children in school as a country can afford, it is not considered obligatory or necessary that governments mobilize the needed resources so that all children can complete a quality education.

**UNICEF (2004): The State of World's Children**

There are children growing up as orphans or with a single parent as fathers have left the family to remarry or earn in a foreign country. Children themselves are forced to assume responsibility for the house and for younger brothers and sisters. There is little time left for school. And often their elders wonder what the school can offer them anyway in their situation?

An extensive UNICEF survey of children and adolescents in East Asia and the Pacific asked those not attending school for their reasons. Some 19 per cent responded that they did not want to go to school or did not like school; 22 per cent had stopped school so that they could work. While 43 per cent reported being out of school due to lack of money, 22 per cent cited the necessity of helping at home and 4 per cent said there was simply no school available.

**UNICEF (2004): The State of World's Children**

#### 5.2.4.3 Girls Education

In Bangladesh the inclusion of girls and children from poor families in primary education has been a success. However, they still suffer from discrimination within and outside the family. Many girls have to participate in the full series of domestic chores—cleaning, washing, cooking, minding children etc. Often in poor families girls have to give a hand in the family's income for survival in spite of their being students in school. Thus for the majority of those enrolled they could not shed their social baggage completely.

Tradition and local 'mores' demand the subordination and obedience of girls. In many families visited it was frowned upon for children, especially girls, to ask questions, express themselves and take an active part in discussions. Many parents felt that girls may be exposed to risks on the way to school.

Most members of the community felt that girls are supposed to be trained for their future jobs in the house and family. They marry young and leave their parents' home. They must be prepared for this future and schools generally do little in this respect. So girls are trained at home by their mothers, aunts and grandmothers for their future lives. They have to work hard day in day out.

### Importance of sending girls to school

The negative effects of not attending school are greater for girls than for boys – and their impact transfers to the next generation of both boys and girls. Whether educated or not, girls are more at risk than boys from HIV/AIDS, sexual exploitation and child trafficking. Without the knowledge and life skills that school can provide, these risks are multiplied.

If educated girls become mothers they are more likely to send their children to school thereby passing on and multiplying benefits both for themselves and society in a positive, intergenerational effect. Education means that children are less likely to be trafficked or exploited as labourers, and less vulnerable to abuse and violence; and since girls are more likely to suffer these assaults, education is especially important to their protection and carries its influence beyond the classroom.

The effect of a mother's education on her child's health and nutrition is so significant that each extra year of maternal education reduces the rate of mortality for children under the age of 5 by between 5 per cent and 10 per cent, according to a review of extensive evidence from the developing world.

**UNICEF (2004): The State of World's Children**

Even if they attend school, they rarely have the time or energy to do their schoolwork.

Some parents felt that school is unsafe and the journey to school is perilous or too long, putting girls at risk of sexual assault or other forms of violence. Others were of the opinion that sacrificing a daughter's work at home or in the fields would jeopardize family income and survival. For poor families, bearing the opportunity cost of sending a girl to school did not seem economically justifiable in the short term.

The inclusion of girls at the primary level has opened up the way to that in secondary and for many to higher education. In these two latter stages, the female students' stipend and free studentship have been a tremendous boost for continuation. Already, it has raised the percentage of female students in secondary classes to 57%— an unthinkable feat. This is delaying the marriage age an important precondition to the change in girls' status and opportunities. The fact that teenaged girls are no longer regarded as burdens in the parents' families because of their student status and stipends has the potential of a great social change emancipating women from their subservient roles. Secondary education has the elements, which can make girls and families ambitious for higher education, and higher stations of life.

**Voice of a Government Official**

#### 5.2.4.4 Teaching Learning Process

The teaching style in the schools visited varied from a total emphasis on rote learning to active involvement of the learners in a few schools. Textbooks are often the only reading material that children, families and schools have. There was a general dearth of teaching learning material in the classroom. In most of the schools teachers talk, the learners repeat until they have learned everything by heart. They are often expected to be word perfect. Children, who have difficulties with this system fall out or are "pushed out", victims of a system that has little to do with active participatory learning and knowledge building. Learning in this form does not develop the potential of the learners.

There have been efforts to bring some flexibility into the system, such as sometimes combining Class 1 and 2, where students do not have to pass Class 1 competencies to go to Class-2. Additionally, the students having difficulty are given some extra help. In





classrooms, there have been attempts at flexible measures, like formative assessment geared towards learning outcomes. If a child is not learning, a different teaching method may be used.

Though there is talk of inclusive and responsive education in Bangladesh, the formal curriculum is not very flexible. There are 19 learning objectives, 13 competencies and more than 200 sub competencies per class. The education system in the country generally allows for limited participation by the children. It is generally a top-down process and does not encourage creativity among children. The same applies to other development and rehabilitation programmes relating to children. Children are rarely consulted or allowed to participate in the decision-making that vitally affects their lives.

#### A PEEP INTO A CLASSROOM

The Govt. primary teacher of class-II has written 18 words in Bangla on the blackboard. The teacher says each word and the children repeat after her. Nobody knows what the words mean. There is no teaching learning material being used to explain to children that everything has a name. No reference is drawn to objects they use or see or even to the fact that children have a name and like their names to be called out when talked to.

Head-teachers when spoken to shared their opinion freely and mentioned that often conditions are such that it should not be surprising if many teachers show little enthusiasm. There is inadequate training, poor and irregular salaries, inadequate professional support, frequent transfers, excessively large classes, few/inappropriate furniture (not lending to reorganization for group work), scarcely any books or teacher manuals (those that exist are not used), no money for teaching materials, lack of motivation and know-how of how to involve children in making low/no cost educational toys.

#### 5.2.4.5 Human resource development

All administrators were unanimous in their view that the development of a teaching force skilled in inclusive practice is vital. The most urgent need is to prepare teachers and administrators to work with all children in the mainstream system and training must be planned systematically on a short-term and long-term basis, systematically and with proper follow up support. There have been improvements in pre-service teacher training, and teacher support through developing a teacher's guide and question banks. Some special courses for children with intellectual and physical disabilities exist, but these are not integrated in mainstream teacher training. Certificate courses for teachers working with special needs students are also available for both government and NGO teachers. Teachers are given 1000 Taka as a bonus for attending these training courses. The effectiveness of these courses needs to be systematically assessed.

Currently the following institutes are engaged in the task:

- Department of Special Education, Institute of Education & Research, Dhaka University
- Teachers Training College, National Centre for Special Education, Dhaka.
- Centre for Disability in Development (CDD), Savar, Dhaka.
- Bangladesh Institute of Special Education, Bangladesh Foundation for the Disabled.

The PTI curriculum needs to be revised in order to provide training in developing a positive attitude regarding differences among children and promoting inclusive practice in schools and communities. Discussion with the trainers revealed that there was a need to plan for building linkages where teachers in mainstream schools meet on a regular basis to support each other and work together on problem solving activities in their own school.

Interaction among the few special educators working in the field and mainstream teachers working in ordinary community schools should be encouraged. The aim should be to impart the required skills. Care should be taken to see that special education is demystified and the message promoted that special education is nothing but good education. University faculty, trainers and teachers should work directly with teachers and supervisors of ordinary schools as part of their own development. Collective thought at the local level is needed for:

- What school networks and clusters can be established?
- How can the required support be made available by linking with schools (NGO/GOB) that have some experience of working with marginalized children?
- How can we promote interactions on issues related to inclusive practice with parents and community members?

#### *5.2.4.6 Recruitment and vacancies*

All head teachers met lamented about the lack of adequate teachers in schools. They informed the team that many times they themselves have to make up for the shortage of teachers. Even when teachers are deputed for training or take leave there is no replacement or substitute teacher available. The impact of the vacancy situation on the quality of primary education in Bangladesh is glaring.

The PEDP II Draft Aide Memoir<sup>7</sup> summarizes the situation by stating that assuming 45 students per primary education classroom, 661,590 children have been deprived of almost a half year of learning opportunity due to the absence of teachers, or an even greater number have suffered diminished opportunity because of overload on other teachers who have absorbed the additional students in their classrooms. It states further that at least 60% of the districts have suffered break down in good governance because of the absence of a DOPE. A very large but unknown number of GPS have been without support or supervision because of the vacancies in Upazila offices.

Female teachers play a critical role in school education for the children as well as retaining enrolled girls in school. Many of the teachers in non-government primary schools are women, however, the proportion of female teachers is less than male teachers in Government Primary schools.

#### *5.2.4.7 Registration of Birth*

Registration of births and deaths has always been the compulsory function of the Union Parishads in the rural areas, and of the Pourashabhas and City Corporations in the urban areas. However, their performance in this regard as revealed by the school administrators remains deplorable. In most cases, certificates issued are fictitious and have no relevance to reality, because of birth and death register is either not maintained at all, or improperly maintained. The dafadars (messengers) and chowkidars (village policemen) have specific responsibilities in collecting and checking birth/death related information, but they simply do not do their job on the plea of other pressing responsibilities. Sometimes, the birth and death register is not even available to the local government bodies. Having to bribe the concerned officials is a common experience of those wishing to obtain a birth/death certificate.

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<sup>7</sup> Siddiqui, KU (2000): Jagatpur 1977-1997: Poverty and Social change in Rural Bangladesh

Birth and death registration is particularly important for ensuring development and protection rights in the CRC. No child-centred development activities at the local level can be adequately planned unless the relevant data are available. For combating child marriage and child labour and ensuring punishment for crimes against children, the age of the victim should be known accurately.



A crowded classroom with inadequate furniture.

Courtesy Els Heijnen

### 5.3 Analysis Based on different Marginalised

The section below discusses the life and livelihood of families and schooling opportunities of the different marginalised groups. The focus is on children from nomadic groups, children of sex workers, and those belonging to the sweeper community, street children, children from the ethnic minorities and children with disabilities.

#### 5.3.1 Bede (River Gypsy Children)

##### 5.3.1.1 Life and Livelihood

Bede (river gypsy) are nomadic people in Bangladesh, who travel most of the time by boat from camp to camp to earn their livelihood. According to a recent estimate there are 40,000 Bedes in Bangladesh (Ahmed 2003<sup>8</sup>)

*The river gypsy groups are mostly homeless and live either on boats or in temporary tents in the places where they camp. Some of them have permanent houses in the villages. There are some areas where the Bedes congregate once in every year (for example, at a place in Savar near Dhaka) and thousands of Bede families come during Id-ul-Azha and live in tents with relatives for several months. A survey identified 65 places where Bede's annual congregations take place. (Maksud 2002)<sup>9</sup>*

The Bedes move and live in groups comprising of 20-500 people either in 'Bahars' (flotilla of boats) or in camps. Most of them move from place to place-selling accessories such as necklaces, bangles, trinkets, talisman etc. The other major groups show displays with trained monkeys, are snake charmers, traditional healers curing pains by applying pressure with cows horns (called sing), practice traditional medicine (with roots and indigenous plants) and some others act as magician or spell binders. Some of them always live in the boats and earn a livelihood by fishing and diving in water to retrieve valuables lost in ponds or wells. Bedes maintain a social organization of their own, living in family groups under a head (Sardar). Early marriage and nuclear family life (each family living in a boat) is the norm. The society is male dominated, but the women do share the burden of earning a living in addition to doing household duties.

<sup>8</sup> Ahmed, Rahnuma and Manosh Chowdhury (2003). Fundamental of Anthropology: Society and Culture page 231, Dhaka (Secondary source)

<sup>9</sup> Masud, AKM (2002), Prospects and Possible Interventions and Potentials for Sustainable Development in Bede Community (Secondary source)

#### *5.3.1.2 Schooling*

The discussion with stakeholders working with the Bede groups revealed that schooling is not given the required attention by the community. Frequent mobility and strong identity with profession act as major de-motivating factors. Maksud's (2002) survey shows that though 49% of the primary school age children get enrolled at some point, their attendance and retention rate is extremely low. Regular attendance round the year is rare with Bede children. Early marriage, the necessity of earning and traveling with their families has a negative impact on their education. This often results in the absence of any opening for skill training other than their traditional ones. The children get caught in a vicious cycle perpetuating their Bede way of life. Various studies attribute the following factors responsible for the non-retention of children in the schools:

- Absence of a permanent abode. Complete families are always on the move and children have no way to continue education even if they are enrolled, unless they stay back with a relative for a good part of the year.
- The demand for the traditional ware and services of the Bedes is becoming very low resulting in their low earnings and poverty. Though many of them are losing their self-esteem and faith in their profession, they seem to be very conservative about themselves and reluctant to leave their way of life.
- Bedes are basically stigmatized and children are often discriminated in school. Other students, parents and even teachers look down upon the Bedes, regarding them as unclean people. Even though people do interact with them as customers they are ignorant about them - usually to their detriment.
- Bedes in general remain rather suspicious of the general population because of the unfriendly treatment they get. Their roaming life-styles make them easy victims to rent-seekers, extortionists, hijackers, deceivers and other kinds of negative characters.
- The particularly poor sanitation and unhealthy living conditions they suffer from worsen their situation as well as their image.

The discussion with the Bede groups revealed that the new generation of Bedes does aspire for a different kind of life. They feel that the required attention has not been given to their development both by the Government and NGO sector. They feel constrained, as their own capacity to organize themselves has been very limited. They all feel that there is considerable scope for increasing their inclusion in society by organizing basic learning centers within their flotilla or near their camps. Once this is achieved the families will be encouraged to keep their children in school adapting to the situation as best as they can. These efforts need to be supplemented with interventions in health, livelihood and social norms.

#### *5.3.2 Children from the Sweeper Community*

Children from the sweeper community and children of sex-workers suffer from extreme forms of stigmatization and deserve urgent attention.

##### *5.3.2.1 Life and Livelihood*

As a legacy from the past the 'Methars (sweeper caste), have settled in various parts of the country (mostly urban areas) to do lowly jobs and 'unclean work' for others. They clean latrines,

go down into sewers to remove clogs, carry night soil out of the primitive bucket latrines, remove dead animals etc. They belong to the lowest caste of the 'untouchables' (in the caste hierarchy of Hinduism). Originally they were brought to Bangladesh from parts of India. They are regarded as unclean, shunned and made to eat and drink from their own separate utensils in public places. They live in their crowded and unhygienic squalor of ghettos and are not allowed much interaction with the rest of the society. A research<sup>10</sup> puts their population as about one hundred thousand, divided mainly between Telegu speaking ('Telegu sweepers') and Hindi speaking (Kanpuri sweepers). They have different customs and social organizations from others and remain among the stigmatized communities. The children from these families also have language problems; as for most of them the mother tongue is not Bangla but dialects of Telegu and Hindi.

### 5.3.2.2 *Schooling*

The social stigma causes almost total exclusion of their children from the mainstream schools. The team visited two schools (Government and NGO run) next to a Methar colony. No child from the colony was enrolled in the schools. Discussion with stakeholders revealed that Concern-Bangladesh runs a primary level school for the children of the sweeper colony (methor patty) in Jautola, Chittagong city. The Society for Underprivileged Families (SUF) has worked in Moghbazar area of Dhaka City and created a community consensus to include such children within mainstream NFE. Support was sought from the enthusiastic local government members. The efforts have resulted in gradually mainstreaming some children to the primary school and high school level.

### 5.3.3 *Children of Sex Worker*

#### 5.3.3.1 *Life and Livelihood*

Another group, which is highly stigmatized, is the sex workers and their children. Cities and big towns have their so called 'Red Light Districts' where the sex workers live and work in small, grim and unhygienic conditions. There are also some big places in the country (Doulotdia, Bonishanta, Mongla, which have grown far from big cities where thousands of sex workers reside with their 'madams' and pimps who live on their earnings. Extortion and criminality is part of the atmosphere.

I have not told anybody about my mother and where I come from. If the others come to know about it they will stop interacting with me. In the last school I attended, I was forced to leave because of the parents of my friends. All of them were asked to stop talking to me, and the principal asked my mother to take me away. My mother pleaded but it was of no use. My class teacher (of the old school) who thinks I am a clever girl and can do well in school helped us in getting admission in this new school, but told us to conceal our identity. I want to study and become a teacher in a school when I grow up.

**Voice of child of a sex-worker.**

One big area in Tanbazar, Narayanganj not far from the city of Dhaka was dismantled and the residents became floating sex-workers all over the city.

#### 5.3.3.2 *Schooling*

Children of sex workers are the worst sufferers living in uncongenial environments, discriminated and often psychologically under tremendous pressure. Their basic human rights are violated and the health of the mothers and children are equally at high risk. Girls face the

<sup>10</sup> Asaduzzaman A(2001), The 'Pariah' People: An Ethnography of the Urban Sweepers in Bangladesh, The university Press Ltd.

handicap of perpetuating the same profession as their mothers. Boys face an uncertain and equally stigmatized future, often as pimps. The children have poor prospect of education and the major barrier is the social stigma attached to them.

#### **5.3.4 Street children**

Street children in many different circumstances constitute a sizable number in Bangladesh and are among those deprived of their rights. A limited number of organizations have planned education for them, perhaps because of lack of stability among them and the need of concomitant interventions.

##### **5.3.4.1 Life and Livelihood**

Street children are working children who live on the streets often away from their families. Some street children go back at night to their families but are living/working on the street during the day. Discussions with stakeholders revealed that most of them are children between 6 and 18 years, fleeing from intolerable poverty, family break down, conflicts, ill treatment and despair. Many felt that this group was rejected by society, deprived of their rights, and plagued by diseases, depressions, and often mistrusted and abused by adults or older children. They are also seen to pursue high-risk, self-destructive behaviors falling easy victims to lures of prostitution, drug addiction, crimes etc. All the stakeholders were unanimous in their view that education and rehabilitation need to be planned on an urgent basis. Most of the children spoken to revealed that they usually survive on their own earnings and/or on others' mercy. The street is where they work and often eat, socialize, play, learn, wash and sleep.

A survey<sup>11</sup> on street children was conducted by ARISE project (Appropriate Resources for Improving Street Children's Environment) of the Department of Social Services, Ministry of Social Welfare (ARISE 2001). It was conducted in six divisional cities mainly through in-depth interviews with street children and other stakeholders. The children were between 13-18 years (39%), 10-12 years (38%) and 3-9 years (23%). Nearly 81% of the respondents had contacts with the families and the remaining 11% were on their own. Only 30% of respondents received some kind of support and assistance in the form of non-formal education, food aid and medical facilities. The assistance was provided by NGOs (65%), GOs (32%) and private organizations (3%). More than 55% of the sample was not literate while for others the literacy ranged from being able to sign names and read a few sentences in Bangla. The respondents were engaged in activities such as hawking, vendoring, begging, pushing carts, doing physical labour, assisting in roadside restaurants etc. The earnings were nominal and only 69% had an income averaging Taka 31.8 per day. Most of the respondents complained about abuses and harassments. 58% talked about sexual, physical abuse and mental and psychological tortures. The children in the sample suffered from a variety of diseases such as gastroenteritis and fever. Some admitted of having sexually transmitted diseases. The study recommends the need to organize NFE Centres, vocational training, job placement, and health care through linkage programs with capable supportive agencies, to take care of these children.

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<sup>11</sup> Bhuinya, A.K. et al, Baseline Survey of Street Children in Six Divisional Cities of Bangladesh. Sustainable Development Consultant Ltd. & Social and Management Consultants, on Behalf of Department of Social Services, Government of Bangladesh.

#### *5.3.4.2 Schooling*

The education intervention needs to be complemented by supportive interventions such as shelter, protection and health. Recently there have been some attempts, albeit limited, to bring the street children to help-way houses providing shelter, food, and counselling services. Experience indicates that while the children appreciate the care, many of them resent the discipline demanded from them. Review of literature indicates that there are some encouraging experiments where effective non-formal education programs are run collaborating with organizations that work with street children. UCEP has enrolled a number of children in its para trade centres. These children are sent there by organizations like Aparajeyo Bangladesh and receive skill training in a regular school-atmosphere for a short period each day. Aparajeyo Bangladesh has 4 drop-in-centres (DIC), 3 in Dhaka and 1 in Chittagong conveniently located for street children to join. There is a friendly environment and flexible timings to allow the children to attend according to their work schedule. The Centres provide safe shelter, subsidized meals, medical attention and health education and facilities for bathing, washing clothes, self-cooking, and lockers. Aparajeyo operates 20 Open-Air Street Schools - 16 in Dhaka and 4 in Chittagong - located in strategic places. Those street children who acquire certain stability and discipline through the transitory process of the open-air schools and DICs are taken into residential hostels of Aparajeyo. Here the children get an option of formal education and vocational training.

#### *5.3.5 Ethnic Minorities*

There are many ethnic groups in Bangladesh spread over a large part of the country. The level of their general economic and social well-being is not uniform and they are often at a disadvantage as regards education and other basic necessities. Their occupancy in difficult locations, different way of life, culture, language, negative attitudes and discrimination from mainstream society places them at a disadvantage. As a result for many, education remains more remote than for the mainstream population of the country and their inclusion is beset with difficulties.

##### *5.3.5.1 Diversity and distribution*

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) consists of three hill districts of Bandarban, Khagrachari and Rangamati. It has the biggest concentration of ethnic minorities and according to 1991 census a little more than half of the population in this region consists of major (11) and some minor ethnic groups. 48.57% of the population consists of mainstream Bengali's many of them migrants and others living there for generations. Some other areas of Bangladesh also have concentrations of ethnic minority groups but they tend to be more dispersed and intermingled with the mainstream Bengali population.

##### *Ethnic Minorities in CHT*

CHT groups are usually discussed separately from the rest of the groups, because of their terrain, concentration, comparative similarity of language and culture, and because of their historical and political differences from others. The Chakmas with a population of about a quarter of a million is the biggest group (25%) in CHT. The other populous groups consist of the Marma (14.6%), Tripura (6.3%), Mro (2.3%) and Tangchangya (2%). Some other groups are Khumi, Khyang, Lushei, and Phanko who comprise less than 1% of the ethnic minority groups in CHT. All the CHT groups belong to the mongoloid race. The economy is based on agriculture and consists of

a combination of traditional shifting agriculture (jhum) practiced in the hills, and the normal mainstream cultivation. Fruit growing, fishing, and hunting are also practiced.

The groups differ widely in language. For example while the language of the Chakma group is Indo-European more akin to the Bangla dialects (used in Chittagong region) that of the Marma's belongs to Tibet-Burma group akin to Myanmar languages. The two major ethnic groups Chakma and Marma practice predominantly Buddhism, but also keep some of their own animistic beliefs. Tripuras, the other major groups practice mostly Hinduism with some difference. The smaller ethnic groups who reside in more remote areas lean more to animism.

#### *Ethnic Minorities in other areas*

The other concentration of ethnic minorities (ranging between 0.5% to 4% of the total population) is in the greater districts of Dinajpur and Rajshai in the northwest, in Mymensingh and Tangail in the North and Sylhet in the northeast. A small ethnic population lives in the southern greater districts of Patuakhali. In the plains the ethnic minorities, though diverse in themselves, differ substantially from those in CHT.

A recent survey (SEHD 2000)<sup>12</sup> of five thanas in the above-mentioned districts with high ethnic population found that the Saontal is the largest ethnic community here constituting 29.92% of the total ethnics. They are followed by Manipuri (26.92%), Oraon (13.16%), Koc (9.40%), Garo (8.32%), Rajbangshi (4.22%), Munda (1.48), Khasi (1.4%), Paharia (1.37%), Hajong (0.64%) and Mahato (0.51%). It may be mentioned that the greater Mymensingh and Tangail districts have Koch, Garo and Rajbangshi, and Hajong population, Rajshahi and Dinajpur districts have Saontal, Oraon, Munda, Paharia, Rajbangshi, and Mahato population, and Sylhet district has mainly Manipuris and some Khasi, and Garo groups.

#### *Life and Livelihood*

According to the above survey most of the ethnic population is engaged in agriculture work. Some groups who do not have their own land work as agricultural labourers. A small group of Manipuris and Garos have joined the services. Among the ethnic groups 60% are Hindus followed by 27% Christians who adopted the religion mainly because of large-scale conversions (especially among the Garos). Almost all the Manipuris are Muslims. The Christian and Hindu population among ethnics also practice traditional animism.

Almost all the ethnic groups have their own language with and without a written script and are reasonably structured. Most of them are now bi-lingual also being able to speak Bangla, however, usually with their own accents.

#### *5.3.5.2 Schooling*

The geographical terrain in CHT poses a common problem of accessibility to education for all ethnic groups. A BRAC study (2001)<sup>13</sup> reveals that the children of two thirds of Chakma villages and over 80% of Bangali, Marma, and Tripura villages have primary level institutions located within

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<sup>12</sup> Gain P, Moral S, Tigga SE, (2000). Discrepancies in Census and socio economics status of ethnic communities: a survey of ethnic communities in five thanas. Society for Environment and Development (SEHD).

<sup>13</sup> Rafi M, Chowdhury AMR (ed.) (2001), Counting the Hills: Assessing Development in Chittagong Hill Tracts. University Press Ltd (UPL).



a mile from their villages. In contrast, comparable access to educational institutions was available to only 6.6% of the children of Mro. For the latter the average distance of the school is about 7.5 miles. The BRAC study found that access is related to the net enrolment rates, it being high for the Chakma(53.2%) and Marma (44.8% ) groups and a mere 7.7% for the Mro ethnic group. The study showed that the performance of the students also suffered because of the terrain and shortage of teachers. Even in CHT where schools are available nearby, the enrolment rate is only 60%. Girls' enrolment was low among the Mro. The study shows that in terms of various educational indicators used there is very little difference between Bengalis and Chakmas within CHT.

The SEHD (2000) survey on ethnic minorities living in the plains reveals that there are differences in the academic levels of achievement among various ethnic groups. The Monipuris and Garos fare well whereas the Saontals lag far behind. The report on BRAC Minority Education Project states that in some of these communities, the learner's best language is Bangla and not the ethnic language. In other communities the learners know very little Bangla when they enter school. The language was found to be a major barrier when children join the mainstream

Some NGOs working with these children are now advocating special schools for particular groups. In these institutions the children are being provided with primers in their own language. Currently, the teachers are selected from the community. However, in the long run this needs to be reviewed to promote inclusive practices.

In the CHT education needs more than just routine attention because there is:

- Lower than national average coverage of society by the network of primary schools (<60%)
- Language communication gaps
- High dropout of students, especially after early grades (>60%)
- Poor quality of teaching
- Out jobbing by teachers
- Inadequate facilities (no sports facilities)
- Inadequate supervision
- Negligence of teachers in giving lessons (absenteeism)
- Shortage, or complete lack of teaching materials
- Relying too much on local leadership
- A disproportionately low number of female teachers.

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In four ethnic clusters in Mymensingh, Sreemongol, Rajshahi, and Joypurhat, BRAC serves over 7600 ethnic children together with mainstream Bengali Children in 628 BRAC schools. In spite of the different mother tongue of the ethnics groups, the medium of instruction remains Bangla. BRAC tried to remove some of the barriers in inclusion through awareness raising workshops with the community and the teachers. It evaluated the effect of the workshops and trainings in a study (BRAC May 2002)<sup>14</sup> and the findings showed that the teachers still remained basically biased towards the Bengali children. They are asked more questions and are called upon much more often than the ethnic children. They are also the ones who are more likely to be appointed group leaders. Though some improvement did take place because of the workshops, the study concludes that prejudice against ethnic minorities persists even among the BRAC program staff.

BRAC also conducted a comparative study on the performance of the Bengali and ethnic minority students<sup>15</sup>. The study proved quite categorically that ethnicity has no rigid relation to the

<sup>14</sup> Hannam R, Parvin S, (2002) BRAC's Ethnic Minority Schools: A Study of Perceptions and Classroom Behaviour. BRAC's Internal Research.

<sup>15</sup> BRAC (2002). A Comparative study on the performance of Bengali and Ethnic Minority students in BRAC schools, BRAC internal Research

performance. The tests showed that in some subjects ethnic minority students did better than the Bengalis. Children from ethnic minorities did better in Bangla reading and spelling, social studies, English word meaning and sentence making. On the other hand Bengali students did better in creative writing, English reading, writing and answering questions, and mathematics. Bengali students were found to be more spontaneous.

A survey done by BRAC resource persons working in BRAC minority education programme revealed that ethnic minority children were usually shy, hesitant to respond in class because they spoke another language and because of the social stigma. They did not wear their traditional dress in school, though they wore them proudly in their community. The survey also revealed that the children from the ethnic minority have comparatively more responsibilities at home and are engaged in activities such as looking after younger siblings. In some minority communities frequent long-lasting festivities take place till late night as a result of which tired students often attend school the following morning. There were indications that if the ethnic language is used as a medium of instruction, the participation and student teacher interaction would improve and the children would learn faster.

UNICEF and CHTDB under joint collaboration have started the Integrated Community Development Project (ICDP). It provides formal education in four residential schools. In another initiative USAID as part of its Basic Education activities is supporting the second phase of the CHT Children's Opportunities for Learning Enhanced, 2 (CHOSEN) projects of CARE. The project will work with 180 formal primary schools of which approximately 50% are government schools. The project aims to provide emphasis on increased access of children from ethnic minority groups of CHT in government schools, the efforts include inclusion of children unable to attend regular classes, increasing demand for girls education (3-5 grades), the use of local language for education, and promoting government support for community schools and education centers.

### **5.3.6 Children with disabilities**

#### **5.3.6.1 Magnitude**

A review of existing literature indicates that according to the 1996-97 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 3 per cent of children under 5 years, and 5 per cent of children under 10 years have disabilities<sup>16</sup> The most common kinds of disabilities in both age groups were related to difficulties in vision and hearing. Poverty, malnutrition, low levels of maternal education and poor pregnancy monitoring were found to be the main causes of such disabilities.<sup>17</sup> As per World Health statistics the persons with disability s constitute about 10% of the population of any country. According to this estimate more than 13 million people of Bangladesh fall in this category. UNESCO estimates (1996) indicates that as many as 80% of these children can be included in regular mainstream education with minor adaptations. Only a small number who have severe impairments may need more specialized education.

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<sup>16</sup> Govt. Of Bangladesh and UNICEF (1997): Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, 1996-87, BBS.

<sup>17</sup> Zaman SS, Khan, Nz, Islam, S and Durkin, M (1992): Childhood Disabilities in Bangladesh, BPF.

### 5.3.6.2 Educational status

Currently only a very small fraction of children with disabilities are being educated either under special education schemes or in mainstream schools. According to the ESTEEM study conducted by CSID only 11% of the children with disabilities receive some form of education. Among the enrolled there are more boys than girls (ratio 56:44). 8% of the enrolled children with disabilities are in primary schools and only 15% children are in pre-primary educational settings. Very few children with disabilities go for higher education. Those who are at present enrolled in mainstream primary schools have only mild disabilities. The children with moderate or severe disability may go to integrated schools. Some form of casual inclusion of children with mild disabilities takes place. The Ministry of Social Welfare runs 64 'integrated schools' exclusively for visually impaired children in residential arrangement. Special schools (government and NGO run) exist mostly in important cities and meet the needs of children with visual, hearing, speech, intellectual and multiple disabilities. One estimate of 2001, puts the number of such schools to be 67 and children served by them at around 9000. Some of these may be too expensive for average and low income families.

It is a tough job to get children with disabilities enrolled in school. Usually parents are reluctant and when some parents try in the ordinary primary schools the teachers are often reluctant and a lot of persuasion is necessary. Most of the government special schools are residential and only in a few big cities. Many parents do not like sending their children away from home. This is especially true in the case of girls.

**Voice of a SMC member**

The ESTEEM study further found that children with disabilities dropped out from the education system because of the unfriendly attitude in the system and due to loss of confidence resulting from poor performance. The study revealed that among children with disabilities children with intellectual disability were least understood and limited understanding existed as regards meeting their needs. Children with visually difficulties did not have adequate assistive devices and Braille books in required number were not available for them, even in the government schools meant exclusively for them. The cost of education was mainly borne by the families (65% cases) followed by the government (20% cases) and other organizations (13% cases). Some children also received home centered education organized by the parents by engaging private tutors. While the children with only mild physical disabilities had similar performance levels as children without such impairments, others fell behind the latter.

A specific study<sup>18</sup> on the feminine dimension of disability shows that accessibility to educational institutions and work are limited. The findings indicate that only an insignificant number of girls and women with disabilities (3.21%) are involved in any full time income-generating activities. For them the attitude of the family and the community has been in general negative, few girls and women with disabilities participate in social activities. The risks for emotional, physical and sexual abuse are very high. More than three fourth of the respondents reported incidences of emotional and physical abuse. A very significant percentage (34%) reported cases of sexual abuse.

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<sup>18</sup> CSID (2002) Feminine Dimension of Disability. Research by Centre for Services and Information on Disability (CSID).

Appropriate policies are required to overcome physical and attitudinal barriers. Discussion with concerned officials revealed that those involved in education including the district primary education officers are not adequately informed about the situation of children with disabilities. In most cases, there are misconceptions on disability issues. The school policy does not allow inclusion of learners with disabilities and a skeptical attitude continues to exist.

## **5.4 Analysis Based on Expressed Opinion**

### ***5.4.1 Planners and Policy makers***

The prospects and problems of inclusive education were discussed with top policy makers of the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education. The general opinion that emerged out of the discussions was that the country's education policies, Constitution, and legal framework, support inclusive education. However, almost all agreed that the situation at the ground level was far from supporting inclusive practice because of barriers related to practicalities of practice. Children with very mild disabilities of the limbs are in the school but the respondents were of the view that all other forms of disabilities need special arrangements and cannot be included in regular schools. They had visited only some special education institutions in developed countries and were of the opinion that children with disabilities need to be taught in separate settings for at least some part of their schooling. Elaborating on the difficulties faced by children with disabilities they mentioned that:

- Physical facilities and the accessibility both within and outside the schools cannot be made disability friendly.
- Schools will need teachers trained in special education to work with children with disabilities. Under the present circumstances student teacher ratio is 56: 1. It is an uphill task to provide for trained special teachers.
- Primary schools cannot provide the kind of flexibility of curriculum and the classroom arrangements needed.
- For many children with disabilities residential arrangements are required which cannot be made available in the existing primary schools.
- Children of ethnic minority groups do not have problems as they are enrolled in the primary school where they live. There is no bar as regards the enrolment of children from the sweeper community and other such marginalized groups. The nomadic Bede people are localized and the difficulties with their enrolment are mainly because of their mobility. So long as they continue to move from place to place other strategies will have to be identified to educate their children.
- The government has taken up a big challenge in PEDP II to finance some 78,000 primary level institutions directly or indirectly.
- The Government is responsible for providing the monthly pay order to all the high schools (an overwhelming majority is non government institutions).
- The education sector does not have the specialized manpower to cope with the education of the children with disability. This is currently the responsibility of the social welfare

sector, which is in the best situation to provide the specialized education services needed. Furthermore, PEDP II has no clear road map explicitly for promoting inclusive practice.

#### **5.4.2 Donor's**

The representatives of the international donor organizations and the relevant UN organizations were of the opinion that, the 'why' of inclusion is clear but the 'how of inclusive practice' is difficult to address and that is where the challenge lies.

According to the donors the following elements in PEDP II can be used proactively for inclusiveness:

- Funds are available for construction of classrooms and furniture.
- School Management Committees (SMC) will be strengthened, and there will be petty cash for their management.
- District Technical Teams will be formed which can have people with expertise on disability and other inclusion issues.
- Upazila Resource Centres can also be useful for promoting inclusive education.
- Additional 10,000 teachers will be recruited helping in decreasing the high pupil teacher ratio.
- National Curriculum and Text Book Board (NCTB) will be made a semi-independent organization. The performance based financing will open up possibilities for reforms to take place.
- Lessons learnt from IDEAL and ESTEEM projects and other good practices will be incorporated. The experience of school mapping in IDEAL project can be further strengthened to promote inclusion.
- BRAC is taking measures to include the physically challenged in their schools. This experience can be utilized.
- Improving teaching practice, building awareness and attitude change among teachers will be the focus of teacher training activities.

#### **5.4.3 Implementers**

The implementers of the IDEAL and ESTEEM projects were of the opinion that there is valuable learning to be drawn on as regards promoting inclusive practice. The following were highlighted:

- IDEAL Project has promoted participatory planning in identifying existing needs, available resources and making school plans. Attempts have been made to mobilize the community to make donations for improving the school environment and providing for the required teaching learning material. A sense of ownership has developed and the community has in some project schools donated ceiling fans, wall clocks, and hand fans. School uniforms have been contributed by well off parents.
- Teachers have acquired skills to use eye testing charts, and functional hearing tests. These skills can be further developed and used to make early identification of special needs in

children. PEDP II – activities need to focus on the early identification of disability and carry forward these attempts. Health professionals need to be sensitized and motivated to support these efforts.

- An effective strategy such as using a flexible school calendar for children belonging to the ‘haor’ community and for shrimp areas has been successful in promoting regular attendance. No schooling is provided in the dry season for the former group and during the fish catching season.<sup>19</sup> In addition experience of working with ethnic minority groups within the project schools in difficult areas where many children have special difficulties can be utilized.
- Improving the classroom environment by providing writing corners to children by painting the lower halves of the walls black and allowing children opportunities to use them has proved to be a positive intervention. Attractive pictures (depicting poem and story sequences) have also kindled interest in children.
- The teacher training materials developed for the training can be utilized with appropriate additions by the teacher training colleges.

The team had discussion meetings with representatives of organizations (for example CSID, BPF, CRP) working for and with children with disabilities. The salient issues, emerging from the discussions, were:

- The major barriers towards the inclusion of the children with physical disabilities are the government rules of business and education being the responsibility of the Social Welfare Ministry, rather than the Education Ministry. This ministry plans special education programmes in separate institutions with a focus only on welfare.
- There is a need to change the attitudes of teachers, head teachers and the school management committee members towards educating children with disabilities in mainstream education. Their general opinion tends to be that the inclusion of children with disabilities adversely affects the performance of other children in the school.
- Schools are crowded and do not have the minimum accessibility and mobility requirements.
- Teachers can be provided training in the existing institutions. CDD trains community workers and teachers in the non-formal sector. It will soon start training primary school teachers. IER of Dhaka University offers a training course in special education. The CRP trains a number of primary teachers every year. Very few government schoolteachers are deputed for the training course in special education.
- There is no segregated data on children with disability or adults in the country. The government through the Social Welfare Department addresses the educational needs of only 1000 children with disabilities. The NGO initiatives are able to meet the needs of 20,000 children.

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<sup>19</sup> The ‘haors’ (huge shallow lakes become cultivable in certain places in dry season, and a lot of activities for children as well as adult start up. That is why schools are kept closed for some time in the dry season. In the coastal areas of south where shrimp cultivation is a big economic activity, children can earn quite a bit by indulging in catching the miniscule shrimp hatchings all through the day. That is why it is better to have school holidays during such catching season.

- Helen Keller International has developed material with simple illustrations (highlighting the do's and don'ts), which the mainstream schoolteachers can use for children with difficulties in vision. Hicare provides speech therapy and conducts hearing tests to determine the hearing profile and makes available hearing aids. It also provides support to mainstream schools including children with hearing difficulties. Meeting the needs of children with intellectual difficulties is found to be the most difficult and few organizations are working to meet their needs.

The group made the following recommendations to meet their needs:

- All primary school teachers should be given a short training, so that they have the skills and the right attitude towards inclusion of children with physical impairments. The focus needs to be shifted towards the achievements of children with disability emphasizing on what they can do, rather than on what they cannot do so that we can build on their abilities. Suitable teaching learning material should be made available such as books in large print.
- Awareness programmes should be arranged for students and parents in mainstream schools to create the right attitudes for inclusion. Mobilization of communities and civil society should be undertaken so that necessary steps can be taken for the inclusion of children with disabilities in the community.
- Provisions within the PEDP II can be utilized for the promotion of the inclusion of children with disabilities. An appropriate stipend can be made available for the children for transport and acquiring aids and appliances and special teaching learning materials if and when needed.
- Double shifts can be introduced for promoting inclusive education. Retired persons, educated youths, social workers and educated housewives could be motivated to work for inclusive education in Bangladesh.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Stakeholder comments</b></p> <p><i>"One of the major barrier to inclusive practice in the system is that IE is not 'the go of the day'. It is not in the system and head teachers are not asked to practice it. The employer does not demand it and so the employees do not practice inclusion. We take no special care to enroll children from the marginalized groups nor do we distribute incentives such as scholarship. The supervisors also do not monitor the enrollment and performance of children from the marginalized groups. Thus teachers are not motivated to take up a pro-active role in promoting the education of marginalized groups"</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Voice of Head Teacher</b></p>
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Forums should be arranged to discuss the various parameters related to inclusive practice and strategies worked out for collective implementation.

#### **5.4.4 National Curriculum Textbook Board members**

The NCTB formulates the primary education curriculum and oversees the production and distribution of textbooks. The discussion with members of the Board revealed that NCTB could take only those initiatives, which are sanctioned and asked for by the higher policy making bodies. Therefore though the NCTB claims to be convinced about the importance of inclusive

education and its implementation, they cannot bring in necessary changes, unless the government policies explicitly prioritize those issues

Most of the members felt that the curriculum in general, remains largely inflexible catering to only the mainstream children. Some members were however of the view that the spirit of inclusion is included in the curriculum and that the textbooks

have chapters, which discuss diversity in professions and culture in the society and also about the ethnic minorities. The issue of children with disability is obliquely covered with an emphasis on evoking 'pity' and providing help. Children's rights are not reflected in the curriculum since NCTB believes that adults need to be informed about them and not children.

The team was informed that a curriculum committee consisting of curriculum and subject experts, teacher trainers and classroom teachers are involved in the revision of the curriculum. No direct attempt is made to obtain the views of parents let alone children. The Government revised the curriculum for Grades 1-4 in 1994. A recent revision of the curriculum was done for Grade 1&2 in 2003 and the next revision is due in 2004 for Grade 3&4.

Attitudinal issues in inclusion, many felt, can be addressed if an attempt is made to achieve the competencies at the primary level. Fifty terminal competencies for the primary stage have been developed and include items related to religion, environmental studies and society, science, language (Bangla & English), Mathematics, Physical Education, Arts & Crafts and Music. There is a need to focus on how realistic is the attainment of the competencies in different areas. For example expecting children to be able "to listen to and understand simple conversation, stories and rhymes in English and to enjoy them at the early primary level may not be attainable. There is a need to analyze as to how far the curriculum is focusing on "to be aware of one's own rights and also the rights of others".

*There is a need to develop a clearer understanding of the concept of inclusive education. We are not directly involved with the inclusive education system, but can include the culture, life style, history of Hill track people in the curriculum of Primary Education". Books in Braille can be produced by the National Curriculum Board, if we are directed by the Government".*

**Voice of a NCTB official**

## 5.5 Key Strengths, Opportunities and Weaknesses/Constraints

### 5.5.1 Strengths

- GOB has ratified various international resolutions.
- GOB's commitment to access and participation at national level exists in:
  - Constitution
  - Compulsory Primary Education Act
  - National Education Policy
  - Legal provisions
- A few special schools which pose no big threat to promoting IE practices

#### Stakeholders' comments

*"We have achieved such good results with girls that we feel soon the boys will require special measures." (Voice of a Government official)*

*"There is no shortage of teachers. Last year we have recruited 300,000 teachers"*

#### Voice of a Government official

*"Community has come forward and contributed generously when approached and convinced that the results will be meaningful. A rickshaw puller has devoted his land in the village for building a school. ...."*

#### Voice of a SMC



- PEDP II: Donors' willingness to promote quality primary education
- Positive community feelings
- Training institutes exist
- Possibility of tapping local resources
- Successful experiences which can be used for further action
- Scope for effective use of media exists

*"In a fast changing world, no policy can, or should, be permanent, static or unalterable. Depending on time and circumstances, the education policy, like all other policies, will be subject to review, change and modification, to carry forward the overall greater objective. The dynamic state and society can thus be more attuned to the times, more enriched and more developed"*

**Extracts from National Education Policy**

### 5.5.2 Opportunities

- GoB's willingness to review, modify and implement changes in National Education Policy in tune with changing requirements.
- Favourable attitude of GoB towards improving quality of education for all children
- GoB has ratified various international resolutions in support of EFA and equal rights and opportunities
- GoB's education policy envisages introduction of a 'coordinated education system' for the 'handicapped' in selected schools.
- Scope for building linkages between Government and NGOs,
- Available media outlets for building awareness regarding the needs of the children with disabilities,
- Teacher training infrastructure exists,
- Possibility of tapping local resources, such as participation of community, parents, NGOs, etc.
- Experience and training capacity among existing organizations working with children who are marginalized and excluded from mainstream education

*"The handicapped children develop fast if they are allowed to receive education with normal children". It also proposes that: "In order to introduce the proposed coordinated education in general schools, special education and subjects relating to the handicapped should be included in the curriculum of Teacher's Training College. This will make it easier for teachers to accept handicapped learners in the general class"*

**Extracts from National Education Policy**

### Stakeholder comments

*"The directorate of Social Welfare runs special schools. Children with disabilities need to be taught in separate schools as other children will make fun of them and are likely to initiate their manners and behaviour. Special separate schools need to be set up as there is a social stigma attached to children with disabilities"*

**Administrator**

*"Children are admitted in the school system on the basis of their capacity to "respond". The children with physical deformity learn in mainstream schools. Since children with MR or HI cannot respond they are not taken in"*

**Voice: Head teacher**

*"Govt and NGO partnership is not feasible, as Govt. doubts NGO activities and look down at their work"*

**Voice of a Govt official**

### 5.5.3 Weaknesses/Constraints

The following weaknesses/constraints emerged in the policies, process, schools and community perception for implementing IE in Bangladesh.

### 5.5.3.1 Policy level

- Insufficient action on the ground in implementing international resolutions
- Policy documents are still suggesting special education programmes, and have not specified any guidelines for IE
- Education ministry does not take responsibility of all children
- Lack of inter-linkages between different Ministries
- Planning Commission's role restricted to approving budgets and finances of proposals only.

#### Stakeholders' comments

*"Schools are very noisy, there is street noise and children can hear the class next door. There is a need to prepare the school environment and build more classrooms, including more quality classrooms suitable for different age groups. The furniture needs to be age appropriate and light to facilitate group interaction during group work."* (Voice of a senior teacher)

*"Teachers' salaries are low and most teachers are engaged in additional jobs.... The teaching profession is considered to be lucrative because there is poor accountability"* (Voice of a School teacher)

*"We have a real age and a certificate age"* (Voice of a SMC member)

### 5.5.3.2 Process

- Lack of understanding of IE practices as effective teaching approach for all children
- Curriculum does not reflect child rights and issues related to marginalised children
- Low quality and insufficient supply of books/material
- Delayed supply of text books especially in rural areas
- The current teacher training programmes are not focussing on IE as an effective teaching approach and continued inadequate training methodology at pre/in service levels
- Dearth of trained teachers and supervisory staff
- Lack of trust and collaboration between Government & NGOs

### 5.5.3.3 Schools

- The mainstream school system is not seen as accountable nor is supported for providing for all children
- Frequent transfer of school staff.
- Birth certificates maintained poorly
- Information is collected only about children in school, and often does not analyse why children do not attend, drop out prematurely or are not enrolled
- Poor accessibility
- Insufficient classrooms

#### Stakeholder comments

A teacher in a Government school with gypsy (boat children) voiced *"though most of the children turned out well dressed they were considered the dirty children by parents of other children simply because they belonged to a gypsy family"*

*"Children from ethnic minorities and identified children of sex workers and children, who come from colonies of scavengers, should study in separate schools. They are the children from extra ordinary families. We do not want our children to learn wrong habits from them. Most street children are sons and daughters of rickshaw pullers/ domestic workers or daily workers."*

**(Voice of a parent)**

- Lack of appropriate teaching learning material
- Lack of display of children's work
- Traditional teaching methodology
- Lack of critical reflection
- Low status of teachers

#### *5.5.3.4 Community perception*

- Attitudinal barriers at all levels
- Traditional social norms and beliefs
- Insufficient participation and ownership

## **CHAPTER 6: RECOMMENDATIONS**

## CHAPTER 6 : RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations relate to developing a clear understanding of inclusive education, overall issues, and with specific reference to different marginalised groups in Bangladesh.

### 6.1 Recommendations related to understanding Inclusive Education

The concept and practice of inclusive education needs to be understood and conceptualized to be able to introduce the required changes at different levels. It is essential to realize that inclusive education benefits all children in the society not just children with disabilities.

Inclusive Education needs to become the real agenda for the nation backed with the political will, or else it will remain the topic of a small minority of enthusiasts. Some key practical elements necessary for IE to get off the ground:

- Clear understanding of IE as an effective teaching approach and political will to change towards whole school improvements
- Providing for access for all (which imply changes in planning and implementation processes and financial allocations)
- Flexible teaching methods and moving away from traditional undifferentiated large group lecturing to child-centred and interactive teaching-learning methods.
- Some physical changes in schools (e.g. an entrance ramp), material inputs (e.g. materials for multi-level and multi-ability teaching)
- Varied evaluation tools with an emphasis on continuous formative assessment.
- Re-organizing the present education administration and monitoring that goes beyond scorecards and classrooms and interlinks with the community.

Major issues for development of IE schools are valuing diversity; child centered pedagogy; creating a welcoming environment for all learners; creating a flexible, inclusive curriculum; developing successful assessment and evaluation methods for IE; capacity building of all education personnel; parent/guardian and community involvement; provision of adequate support for learners with special needs; and the development of policies to support these developments

**The Consultative Workshop on  
Inclusive Education 2001**

#### SOME LOCAL MYTHS ABOUT IE

- The existing resources are too scarce and do not match the challenge involved.
- There is a need to change the societal attitudes first, because inclusion is untenable within the atmosphere of stigma and unfriendly attitudes.
- Belief of some parents that inclusion will harm both children without and with disabilities by impeding their progress.
- Some activist organizations and experts feel threatened and are guarding closely the separate arrangements in their care. They feel they will lose their identity.
- The basic abilities are lacking among the teachers and other education implementers, and the capacities are difficult to build.
- Meeting the needs of the marginalised is the role of the Social Welfare Ministry
- Inclusive education initiatives can begin only when instructions are sent from the higher authorities.

There is an urgent need for building the required environment in order to handle the general lack of will, as inclusive practice is considered too difficult and complicated for many practitioners. The existing myths associated with the practice need to be identified and initiatives taken to change opinions and attitudes.

Understanding inclusive practice can also be facilitated when interactions are built between the few special educators working in the field and mainstream teachers working in ordinary community schools. The aim should be to exchange the required skills. Care should be taken to see that the purpose is to demystify special education and promote the message that special education is nothing but “good education”. University faculty, trainers should work directly with teachers and supervisors of ordinary schools as part of their own development. Teacher-teacher exchanges also are conducive for changing school practice and should be organized on a regular basis at the school cluster level with proper follow up support.

Inclusion is not just about including the excluded within the class room but also about allowing full participation, meeting individual needs and ensuring inclusive responsive quality education for all students. This understanding needs to be borne in mind by one and all.

Parents are a rich resource and they should be encouraged to share information based on their experience of raising their children. This knowledge should be used in organizing teaching experiences. Opportunities need to be provided for exchanging these experiences with other parents and other concerned people.

### ***Mobilizing opinion and creating awareness***

Initiating change in favour of inclusive education involves mobilizing opinion, and building consensus. At the national level, a debate on inclusive education should begin the process of consensus building, which can help to develop a belief in society that the right to education is a basic human right, as is the right to non-discrimination.

There are positive elements within the social setting in the country that should be utilized in mobilizing the public opinion for inclusive education. Neighbours usually share their lives in many ways even if there is difference in their economic and social standing. They tend to look after each other, stand beside others in time of crisis. This social bonding can help create attitudinal change towards children who are excluded in education.

A positive impact on the attitude can be made through community awareness programmes to promote support for education of marginalised children. Messages shared should be convincing and based on existing realities. Inclusive education should not be perceived as an imposition from the west and emphasized by donors only.

Useful documents need to be identified (for example the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Standard Rules and the Salamanca statement) that can be used as campaigning tools for promoting inclusive practice. They need to be translated in a simple, reader-friendly manner and the messages disseminated.

IE is more than just a philosophy. It is based on the conviction that each child has a right to mainstream quality education, that all children benefit from IE, and that it is the responsibility of everyone involved in a child's education (parent/guardian, teacher, administrators, community, government) to proactively ensure this.

**The Consultative Workshop on  
Inclusive Education 2001**

## ***Providing Incentives***

The inclusion of girl students has been much enhanced by the incentives of stipends. Similarly, working children have been encouraged to be in school by providing placements in jobs. In case of other children who are still to be included, similar strategies may be considered. Stipends, job placements, hostels, medical intervention, remedial measures etc. may be used as incentives.

### **Some Messages for creating awareness and mobilizing opinion in favour of IE**

Children are born into communities along with their brothers and sisters and should be allowed to go to the neighborhood school with them. They should be provided an opportunity to learn that there are differences and that we need to care for each other. The roots of this learning are laid in the early years of life. Young children are the future of any nation and may become the future policy makers and implementers of inclusive practice. They need experience of inclusion in their lives if they are going to be able implementers. If children live with others in the community everyone gets to know them with their needs and accept them. This tends to encourage them to work collectively to meet their needs and seek appropriate support.

When teachers complain about class size they should be asked to work out ways of reducing its size without excluding children who have special needs. What difference would a few children with special needs make? Why should they miss out just because the class size is too big? It is the school's problem not the child's and the authorities must collectively find ways of handling it, without having to exclude children from their equal rights and opportunities. There is an educational, social and economic justification for inclusive education, which needs to be highlighted.

Whatever can be done within the present resources and circumstances should be done now. We can begin with the minimum "doable". This may be school mapping, local level community motivation, parent involvement, basic teachers-orientations, teachers sharing ideas and working in teams, motivating learners, classroom management, pairing children for cooperative learning, providing simple low cost teaching material, recording success and challenges. These small steps will create a momentum for the next steps.

Look for opportunities that can result in more interactions between both mainstream and the marginalized groups. This will promote knowledge and understanding of each other and reduce alienation and stigma.

Given the opportunity, children with disabilities and any other children from marginalized groups have the same capacity to unfold their potential and develop as any other child.

Having a class friend with a physical disability and to be able to help him/her is itself a part of education that could enrich the development of children without disabilities enormously as the myth that children with disabilities are only on the receiving end will change. A healthy mutual exchange begins to develop.

The campaigns and the interventions should activate all possible partners– GO, NGO, civil society, private sector and people in general. Successful existing interventions should be encouraged and used as models. To facilitate these, the core think-tank and the networking mechanism for this should be expanded in a more inclusive manner.

The inclusiveness of education itself can play a very big role in changing social attitudes. Therefore other interventions for such social change should go parallel with the inclusive education, rather than the latter waiting for the former to happen.

Special education should be looked at as preparatory and the feeder to the inclusive education, for most children rather than as an end in itself.

## **6.2 Recommendations related to overall issues**

### ***6.2.1 Involvement of people***

The involvement and participation of people at all levels is essential for understanding and promoting inclusive practice. This can be done by enabling people to identify traditional /local

values that support the CRC and inclusion, exploring their own beliefs and problems and in the process arriving at their own solutions. The annual children's rights week and other similar events will have to be particularly targeted for a motivational campaign.

It is recommended that a concerted and planned campaign at all fronts, should be taken up to internalize the CRC and the need for encouraging inclusive practice. In this way the message can spread to all relevant sections of Bangladesh society in a fairly short period of time, given the homogeneity of the society (88% are Sunni Hannafi Muslims and 98% speak the same language) the small area of the country and availability of a network of transport and communication.

### ***6.2.2 Policy and Practice***

There is a need to critically review the National Plan of Action (NPA) for EFA and generate a public debate. This NPA needs to support inclusive practice and not discuss only benefits for children with disabilities. It is incorrect in its assumption when it states "that the handicapped children develop fast if they are allowed to receive education with normal children" as practice indicates that both groups benefit equally. Further it is considered undesirable to categorize and label children as "normal" and "handicapped" The National Policy 2000 document is still suggesting special education programmes. There are no specific guidelines to either address or facilitate inclusive education. Concerted efforts are needed in bringing about the required changes in the policies and putting them in practice.

### ***6.2.3 Children's participation***

Seeking children's participation in devising and implementing education and rehabilitation action programmes is essential. A combination of free, compulsory need-based, meaningful, and vocational education based on children's participation is required. Care needs to be taken to see that the participation does not degenerate into "tokenism" or manipulations or "fine tuning" of a pre-conceived strategy. The on-going consultation process for the National Plan of Action (NPA) for children could be seen as an example of good practice in this field.

In addition concerted efforts are required against long hours and poor conditions of work for children and certain unacceptable hazardous child labour, child prostitution, other sexual abuse of children, and child trafficking.

### ***6.2.4 Forming meaningful partnerships***

Local government agencies should understand and develop the capacities to carry out existing policies. They need to ensure that marginalised children are included in general mainstream schools, and that the world of diversity is respected in school and in the community. In this respect, forming partnerships between schools, parent groups, community leaders, NGOs, Government and professional groups is essential in the promotion of inclusion in schools and community. This endeavour needs to focus on parents' and the community's roles in children's education. The approach needs to be guided more by education and non-discrimination as fundamental rights of every child than by the concept of charity and welfare.

People with disabilities, their organizations, and other marginalised groups must be involved in formulating policy and planning processes and designing programmes.



### **6.2.5 Role of the IE Core group**

The second Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP II) focuses on quality improvements that will establish the necessary foundation for a more efficient and effective primary education system. The IE Core group<sup>20</sup> in Bangladesh should act as a technical partner to PEDP II focusing on the inclusiveness and responsiveness of the quality components of PEDP II, both in access and teaching-learning practice.

### **6.2.6 Legal provisions**

There is a need to discuss with different professionals and delineate action related to the need for enactment of new legislations, amendments of existing ones (such as for example raising the age of criminal responsibility) and their enforcement. An appropriate strategy would be to adopt a step-by-step approach.

There is a requirement to create awareness about the legal provisions among the public and the need to abide by them. The starting point can be to bring pro-children laws under one cover, translate these into Bangla, and ensure their widest dissemination and commitment to them by the widest sections of the society. A combination of progressive legislations, targeted programmes with wide coverage and judicial activism, are required to make a real impact on disadvantaged families and their children.

### **6.2.7 Birth Registration**

Necessary steps need to be taken for proper registration of birth and deaths by the local government bodies. It will help plan for all children including the marginalised realistically and effectively. The reorganization can be started on a pilot scale before adopting it nation wide.

People need to understand the importance of the registration, for which a carefully planned awareness campaign with effective monitoring is required. It should be made compulsory to produce birth certificate for admission to schools, registration of marriages, application for jobs, etc. Local level workers should involve colleagues from the health and family planning divisions and a system with an inbuilt periodic checking should be put in place.

### **6.2.8 Low Status of Women**

It is important to consider that a higher status of women in Bangladesh society is imperative not only for its own sake but also for ensuring children's rights. It is seen that due to the marital vulnerability of women (particularly in the lower strata) and their low status, children become the worst affected victims. Laws need to be enacted and their enforcement ensured so that men do not leave families without financial assistance. The media can play an important role to gradually change existing perceptions and highlight the role of women in society.

### **6.2.9 Role of the Donor Community**

Donor agencies can play a crucial role in providing the much needed resources and exerting the right kind of pressure in favour of pro-children laws and policies and their implementation.

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<sup>20</sup> The IE Core Group consists of UNESCO, MoPME, Save the Children, UNICEF, UCEP, BPF, BRAC.

### ***6.2.10 Financial allocations***

Budgetary allocations for promoting the education of all children in one mainstream education system need to take into account the backlog created, as a result of long neglect of the needs of children from marginalised communities.

Defense expenditure by the Government can be reduced in order to divert scarce resources to primary education and primary health care, which directly serve the interests of children and society.

### ***6.2.11 Learning from successful experiences***

Bangladesh needs to look at other low-resource countries in Asia and learn from their successful experiences with inclusive practice. In Lao PDR, China and Vietnam for example governments have shown high commitment and success in creating more inclusive and child-centered mainstream teaching-learning environments, while at same time improving the formal (pre)-primary education system as a whole. Opportunities should be provided for teams to visit practices in these countries and enrich understanding related to inclusive education.

Sharing ideas and information about practice in the country is also central to developing skills, knowledge and understanding and reinforcing changes of attitudes and values. The concerned departments should encourage information dissemination.

### ***6.2.12 Improving teaching practice***

Teachers need to be professionally supported to change from the traditional large group lecturing to child-centered and interactive teaching-learning methods. They need assistance to see the importance of flexibility in the teaching methods used and how to adapt the classroom and school environment to overcome barriers to access, participation and learning. Teaching-practice need to reflect an understanding of diversity and equity, and teachers must role model such understanding in how they behave and teach, to facilitate participation and learning for all children in their classroom. They need to learn strategies to respond to diversity and individual learning needs (curriculum adjustments, positive classroom management, cooperative learning etc). The Bangla version of the UNESCO teacher Guide” Understanding and Responding to Children’s Needs in Inclusive Classrooms” is an important tool that can be used both by trainers of teachers and teachers alike.

It is now necessary to refocus from enrolment and completion rates to what actually happens (or does not happen) in schools and classrooms. There is a need for a conscious effort to find out why many children are excluded from participation and learning, different children’s lives and the reasons why they may perceive education as non-meaningful, irrelevant, coercive and inflexible.

### ***6.2.13 Teacher Training***

Many schools have large numbers of children in each class and some teachers are reluctant to work with marginalised groups considering it an additional workload. Improved teacher training is a must. It should result in the creation of teaching-learning environments that are both welcoming and responsive to learning, which is different for different children. Just knowing

theoretically that all children have the same right to education based on equal opportunities is not enough. Implementing such principles requires pro-actively creating equal opportunities in inclusive teaching-learning environments together with children, teachers, parents and communities.

Provision of appropriate training of teachers and administrators is needed. Local management committees and government education officials at Thana level must be given IE training and specific guidelines mandating their decisions. In addition orientation and awareness programmes should be given to all sections of the Ministry of Education to help plan for inclusion of children with special needs and other marginalized children according to international standards as part of the GOB CRC implementation. There is a need to train existing academic supervisors and head teachers to support schools for inclusion. Distance learning courses should be planned carefully. Teachers should be encouraged to enroll and their completion can be linked to promotions.

The teacher is the most important human resource for promoting inclusive practice. It has been noticed that the regular classroom teacher has to battle it out with little support. Onsite support is essential and the setting up of “Teacher Support Teams” in every school cluster can also be promoted to provide onsite support as a matter of policy. Grass root level workers, parents, special teachers, Para teachers and others can be shown how to provide the required support.

There is also a need to plan that mainstream teacher-trainees during their training learn to teach all children in the same classroom. There is a need to introduce the required changes in the PTI curriculum. The government should coordinate with NGOs for teacher training programmes. A comprehensive training package on inclusive education as an integral part of effective teaching skills needs to be developed for the purpose. Care needs to be taken to study the existing material both inside and outside the country and make suitable modifications and additions.

#### ***6.2.14 Creating an Environment for Innovation***

There is a need to create a school environment that encourages risk taking so teachers have the time and inclination to try out new approaches and become reflective practitioners. They should believe in their actions and not have to worry about inspectors or head teachers not liking what they are doing. A whole school approach to school improvement has proven more effective in establishing changes in schools, than training only a few of the staff.

#### ***6.2.15 CBR Support***

The base for CBR programmes should be strengthened so that the support in the form of promoting access to inclusive education, introducing reforms in schools and providing other supporting materials are facilitated.

#### ***6.2.16 Filling up vacancies***

The dearth of required teachers in schools clearly highlights the need for concerted actions on the part of the Government to recruit more teachers and fill up the vacant positions. A plan to fill vacancies should be worked out. There is a need to also reexamine the recruitment process and salary for schoolteachers.

### **6.2.17 Involving Community**

An important task in building effective support for schools is to mobilize the resources that already exist in schools and the local community. In addition there is need for some external support such as teams of teacher trainers or support teachers coming in on a regular basis.

The government has made efforts to involve community through local level committees such as School Management Committee (SMC), Parent Teacher Association (PTA), to create awareness on enrollment and to facilitate communities to play a role in improving the performance and accountability of the teachers. However, there is a need to make provisions to include mothers and more female representatives of the local government.

### **6.2.18 Text-books**

The content of books needs to relate more closely to the realities of children's lives as well as to the overall purpose of education, and care needs to be taken in the selection of fairy tales, legends, sayings, and celebrations/festivals, traditions and culture of children, promoting recognition and self-confidence on the part of the minority groups too. The text should not perpetuate clichés of the division of labour or the hierarchy of the sexes. The new books need to be complemented by manuals or instructions for teachers emphasizing ways of involving learners in the process of learning. Children need to be provided opportunities to learn how to work with books.

### **6.2.19 Early childhood care and development**

Early childhood development initiatives are limited. There is a need to combine consultancy services for parents on matters of health, hygiene and nutrition with pre-school programmes, focusing on the required pre-reading and pre-writing skills. These need to awaken the child's potential as they learn through play. They need to promote acceptance of children as autonomous individuals, which is by and large not how they are considered culturally.

### **6.2.20 NGO and GOB collaboration**

Inclusive education in the country requires proper planning and exchange of experiences related to existing practice. Many different kinds of schools exist, some formal, some non-formal differing widely in the quality of education provided. The formal schools with the traditional teaching and learning tend to often widen the gap between the "haves" and the "have not". The non-formal schools are working with a "singular focus with specific groups (hard-to-reach, domestic workers, Bede children, street children, children with physical impairments, etc). The children are segregated from mainstream education and mainstream development. There is a need to rethink how both forms of schooling can work in tandem and complementary, while facilitating NGO and GOB collaboration.

### **6.2.21 Coordinated efforts**

There is a need for coordination and forming inter-linkages among existing ministries (for example between the health and social welfare units) and ordinary schools. Coordination committees comprising of the leaders of these systems should be established at the district level and linked to Upazila Education Resource centres, to SMCs and PTAs.

#### **6.2.22 Consistent data**

There is lack of consistent and reliable data on the magnitude and education status of children with disabilities and the disparities between regions and types of disabilities. Reliable information on other marginalised groups of children in the country is also not available. This makes it difficult to understand the nature of the problem, and to make realistic interventions.

Save the Children and FIVBD are developing a C-EMIS approach linking GoB and NGO primary education programmes in local level data collection and educational planning and monitoring. C-EMIS seeks to make all children visible in an administrative catchment area. Links with the Government are to be formed and the information used for inclusive education planning, management and monitoring.

#### **6.2.23 Curriculum**

Within the education system the curriculum is one of the major obstacles for inclusion. The curriculum is extensive, demanding, centrally designed and rigid. It lacks the required flexibility to cater to the different learning needs and learning speeds of all children.

It needs to be made flexible and responsive to the diverse learning needs of all children. The curriculum can facilitate the development of more inclusive settings if schools or teachers are allowed to make adaptations to enhance the relevance for local contexts and different learners.

The NCTB should take the necessary steps in order to ensure that curriculum developers and all subject teachers engaged in the revision process are well aware of the concept and practice of inclusive education. The issues related to marginalised groups need to be represented in the subsequent curriculum revisions. Future attempts at revision ought to include also the views of children and communities. Thana education officers can assist the process by periodically collecting such views.

No uniform sign language has been developed in the country. There is no dictionary of sign language. This requires attention.

#### **6.2.24 Action Research**

In order to strengthen impact of inclusive education it is recommended that those involved are encouraged to undertake action research regarding their practices and research findings be disseminated.

#### **6.2.25 Role of Media**

The print and electronic media can play an important role initiating a debate and shaping public opinion in favour of inclusive education among all stakeholders. Various associations working for drama and cultural events can be involved on a regular basis in monitoring how characters and stories project issues related to marginalised groups.

### **6.3 Recommendations related to different marginalised groups**

#### **6.3.1 Children of the Ethnic Minorities**

Language, scattered population, social alienation and rejection are the major problems of ethnic minorities, which need to be addressed within the framework of inclusiveness. Maximum

interactions and exchange of ideas should be planned for, with the mainstream community in order to remove prevailing ignorance and negative attitudes. In addition there is a need to develop mechanisms for consultation with ethnic minority communities (in CHT, Sylhet, Mymensingh and northern part of Bangladesh) on strategies for increasing access to education and promoting inclusive schooling.

#### *Exchange of experiences*

Most of the existing interventions for education of ethnic minorities are through NGOs and concentrate on exclusive minority schools, rather than inclusive ones. The strategies adopted by these schools should be carefully studied and with appropriate support used in inclusive settings. Interventions should relate to geographical and social reach, making education relevant and related to livelihood, and resulting in empowerment and improved quality of life.

#### *Textbooks*

Though the diversity of ethnicity and culture are included in the curriculum and textbooks to some extent, the life, problems and issues of the minorities are not discussed, nor are the characters mentioned in the various stories representing the ethnic child or adult or their family life. The textbook board and curriculum revision committees need to ensure that appropriate steps are taken to change this. There is a need to discuss the ways of life, festivals, beliefs, problems and issues of minorities as compared to other population groups in a positive, constructive manner.

#### *Supplementary Books*

Development of supplementary books both in the ethnic language using Bangla script and Bangla is recommended. These can be used in the early years as additional primers for the literacy development of ethnic children. Inclusion of Bangla translations will enable Bengali teachers as well as Bengali peers to also use the books optimally. These can be especially useful in the lower primary grades.

#### *Teaching staff*

There should be some members of relevant ethnic groups within the teaching staff in proportion to the number of students. Possible relaxation of qualification may be made in case of scarcity of such teachers. Female teachers need to be appointed wherever possible.

#### *Participation*

Participation of ethnic children in all school activities including co-curricular programmes should be ensured and some of them should be encouraged to lead the proceedings. The use of ethnic languages within and outside the classroom should be allowed and taken as normal.

#### *Building new schools*

In the construction of new schools and classrooms, priority must be given to remote, underserved, under-schooled areas of CHT and areas with ethnic minorities in other districts.

Para Kendra's (pre-primary) schools under ISDP could be upgraded to 2 grades in the remote areas having no primary school.

### **6.3.2 Children from Bede, Sex Workers, Sweeper communities**

#### *Discrimination*

Social stigma attached to profession and belonging of families of *Bede* community, hereditary sweeper community and sex workers play a major role in the educational exclusion of these children. As a step towards educational inclusion, craving them out of captivity and the stigmatic environment a position of indignity is essential. Teachers can be encouraged to take a lead in this direction.

#### *Encouraging Diversification*

The growing trend within *Bede* community to diversify their profession beyond their traditional ones requiring nomadic life is a positive one. Relevant agencies and organizations should take a more proactive role in supporting these changes, rather than be neutral about this and treating this as a desirable anthropological diversity.

#### *Educational settings*

Those *Bede* groups who move in a small area should be encouraged to send their children to a primary school nearby. In other cases, relatively older children can stay with the relatives who are living in a more settled life in the villages. Organize boat schools traveling with the *Bede* flotilla, to act as feeder schools for the younger children. Teachers can have temporary lodgings near wherever the flotilla is camping for the season. Education authorities should recognize the problems of the schools that include *Bede* children, and should make necessary interventions to support their schooling.

Mainstreaming children in ordinary residential school settings (whenever required) and ensuring a stigma-free environment can develop a forward-looking attitude among them. Education authorities should plan for providing appropriate supportive measures.

#### *Early intervention*

Early childhood care and basic education should be made available for very young children especially of sex-workers. For children from the sweeper community basic education centers should be set up in or near the ghettos for the very young children, to also prepare them for mainstreaming in ordinary primary schools. Care should be taken to ensure that children understand the language used in the school. Teachers can be selected from the community.

#### *Supporting communities*

Organizations working towards social emancipation of these communities should take a more proactive role in encouraging and supporting the communities for diversification of professions beyond the traditional ones. Dialogues should start with the communities.

### **6.3.3 Street Children**

The educational interventions for street children need to go together with other interventions touching their overall life such as shelter, physical and psychological security, skill training etc.

Providing shelter-cum night schools can be a motivating factor for them to receive education along with their regular work.

While preparations should be made to include children with all contingencies, a stereotyping of all street children as brutalized, criminalized and on the brink of breakdown, should be avoided by introducing appropriate measures.

A possible way suggested to promote inclusion is by organizing drop-in-centres and shelters, which provide basic protection and basic education. When they are settled physically and psychologically, they can be admitted into the mainstream primary or NFE schools, keeping their income options open.

#### **6.3.4 Children**

Functionally assess children's ability and areas of difficulties and make appropriate classroom adjustments. Start with making small classroom adaptations such as proper light, seating position and sound-proofing (matting the floor using woven mats).

Create friendly and joyful interactions with and among children. Provide children with opportunities to interact freely and explore each other's strengths and weaknesses. Develop and provide simple low cost aids e.g. for children with visual difficulties big print books, thick tipped pens, reading and writing guides, magnifying glass can be made available. During free play and organized sports activities ensure that appropriate modifications are made to the existing materials (sound producing ball for children with visual difficulties in a game of cricket) and make provisions for alternative sports where required.

Children with intellectual impairments and children with multiple disabilities have to be given greater priority as they are among the least understood children. Home-school programmes can be a good starting point for some children who cannot yet attend mainstream schools.

There is a lack of awareness among the general public regarding the causes, early detection and prevention of disability. Children with disability are often marginalised within the education system and society in general. The education of children is considered a matter of general charity and welfare rather than a right that every child should demand. Concerted efforts in a planned manner by pooling existing human resources are required to remove these perceptions.

Disability sensitization programmes to raise awareness should have the active participation of people with disabilities as role models. These people can propagate direct and positive messages to the general public. The issues related to disability should be included in the school curriculum to promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities from the early years of childhood.

Accessibility to education can be improved by making minor modifications in the physical structure of schools. The school building, classrooms, libraries, toilets, taps and roadway, need to be built or modified taking into consideration the needs of children with disabilities. It must be recognized that these basic facilities are cost effective and are useful for all children.

The school environment should be conducive for children with disabilities, and the school staff must be supportive and understanding. Teachers should help children with disabilities to feel as comfortable as other children in the school.



Prevention needs more programmes and more resources. The focus should be on advocating early identification and intervention for children with disabilities, and the provision of early childhood development services. This is an area of critical importance as it is easier to work with disability if it is detected early.

Support to children with disability could be built through creating a support network of non-disabled peers. This would help not only in sharing the responsibility but also promoting a non-discriminative social relationship.

## **APPENDICES**

## **APPENDIX 1 : LIST OF INSTITUTIONS VISITED AND PEOPLE MET**

### **Government officials**

- Prof. Dr. Tehmina Hussain, Secretary MoPME
- Mr. Kazi Farid Ahammed, Joint secretary MoPME
- Mr. Gopal Chandra Sen, Division Chief, Ministry of Planning
- Team from National Curriculum Text Book Board

### **Donors and IE Core Group Members:**

- PEDP II related donors
- DFID/NRE/ADB
- World Bank
- DNFE donors (SIDA)
- Save the Children
- PLAN, Bangladesh

### **Schools Visited**

- BPF
- FIVDB, Sylhet
- BRAC Schools in Sylhet & Chittagong
- UCEP Para center, Mohammadpur
- Hard To Reach School
- RIC School
- UCEP, Chittagong
- HICARE School
- Shaishob. Bangladesh
- Government Primary School for Bede Children
- School for Street Children (DAM)
- Resource School for Ideal Project, Jigatola

### **Disability Organisations**

- CSID
- CDD
- BPF
- HICARE

### **Team leaders of IDEAL and ESTEEM Projects**

### **Org. Working with Ethnic minorities (ASRAI, SEHD, NARI Maitree, BRAC)**

### **Discussions with:**

- Children
- Parents, SMCs,
- Other community members
- Teachers, Head Teachers

## **APPENDIX 2: INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IS A RIGHT OF ALL CHILDREN**

### **Children Who learn together**

Learn to live together

Save the Children

### **What is Inclusive Education (IE)?**

Inclusive education is a strategy to improve education systems, by challenging and changing exclusionary policies and practices. IE is concerned with minimizing and removing barriers to access, participation and learning for all children, but especially for those who have been socially discriminated because of poverty, child labour, disability, gender, ethnicity or other differences. IE is implementing the right to non-discrimination. It acknowledges that children are different and that such diversity is normal. It challenges education systems and schools to become more learner-centered, flexible and diversity-friendly. IE enables children to learn and live together, which is a first necessary step towards a more tolerant and democratic society. It recognizes every child's right to be part of mainstream life irrespective of his/her socioeconomic background or individual characteristics. Inclusive education is a basic human right!

### **National and international commitments**

Inclusive education (IE) is based on a rights and responsibility analysis showing that national education systems are responsible for all children. Segregating children in non-formal programmes sustains social inequalities. The Compulsory Primary Education Act (1991) reiterates equal rights for all school-aged children, including working children, children with disabilities, children in institutions and those born out of wedlock. This is incompatible with the many parallel non-formal programmes that keep children segregated from mainstream education and mainstream development.

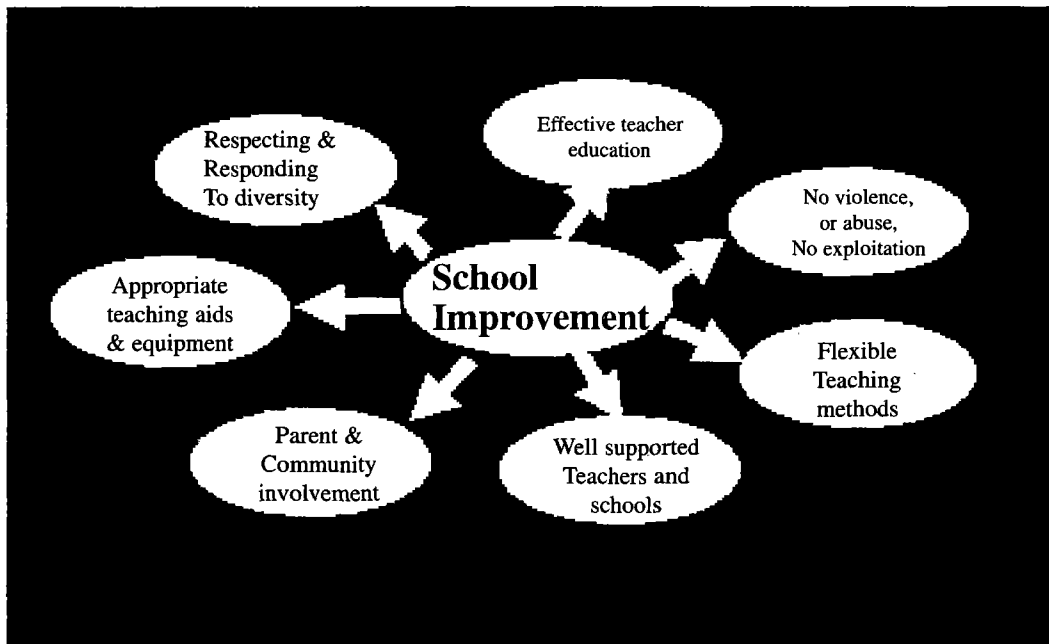
IE is consistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) ratified in 1990 and thus legally binding. All children should have equal rights and opportunities in education, and schools are responsible to teach all children, based on the key principles of non-discrimination, the best interest of the child, optimal survival and development and child participation.

“School with an inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all “[UNESCO Salamanca Declaration 1994]”.

IE is also consistent with the EFA Declaration (Dakar, 2000) and E9 Declaration (Recife, 2000), calling for mainstream education systems that are inclusive and flexible.

“The key challenge is to ensure that the broad vision of Education for All as an inclusive concept is reflected in national government and funding agency policies...” [Dakar Framework for Action para 19].

## Inclusive education is about transforming the system



### We should promote inclusive education because

Children have equal rights.

- All children can learn and all children are different.
- Diversity is a strength.
- Schools and teachers can learn how to respond to different learning needs effectively.
- It contributes to the quality of Education For All.
- It is part of a wider strategy that promotes an inclusive mainstream society.

*IE brings quality improvement in teaching  
and managing because there is ...*

## M

## O

## R

## E

MORE experience-based, hands-on learning, teaching children to think and reasons.  
MORE active learning (doing, talking, trying out).  
MORE emphasis on higher-order thinking.  
MORE responsibility given to students for their work, goal setting and monitoring.  
MORE enacting and modeling of the principles of democracy.  
MORE attention for emotional needs and different cognitive styles of individual students.  
MORE cooperative activities.  
MORE reliance upon teachers' descriptive evaluation of student growth.  
MORE varied and cooperative roles for teachers, administrators and parents.

## L

## E

## S

## S

LESS whole-class, teacher-directed lecturing and instruction.  
LESS passive learning, such as sitting and just listening.  
LESS rote memorization of facts.  
LESS stress on competition and grading.  
LESS tracking or leveling students into "ability groups".  
LESS use of, and reliance on standardize tests.

### **We can also develop collaborating schools piloting inclusive education...**

- With learning environments, where children feel safe and encouraged to ask question or voice their ideas;
- Where no physical punishment or other degrading punishment takes place;
- Where school-based learning and participation is relevant and enjoyable for al children;
- Where education is related to and based on the realities of different children's lives;
- Where children are fallowed to learn at different rates, and where teachers vary their teaching methods accordingly;
- Where teachers are encouraged to work together and support each other;
- Where parents and communities are involved;
- Where the curriculum is free from stereotypes, and where gender and diversity issues are addressed adequately;
- Where human rights are promoted through teaching and role-modeling;

### **How can we support inclusive education?**

1. By advocating free, compulsory primary education for all children.
2. By carrying out a local education situation analysis, collecting information on all children in an administrative 'catchment' area, making all children visible, and the reasons why they are not in school.
3. By identifying simple and cost-effective ways to overcome physical, social and other barriers to access and learning.
4. By lobbying for educational reform while involving communities in planning and monitoring quality education for all children.
5. By promoting inclusive policies and legislation (e.g. National Education Policy; NPE) and monitoring implementation.

Defining education as a right implies that no school may discriminate or exclude a child whatever his or her socioeconomic background or learning needs. Quality reforms are needed to make mainstream schools more flexible, child friendly and diversity responsive. They have to develop into:

#### **6.3.4.1 SCHOOLS FOR ALL**

For more information:

Programme Officer

Non-discrimination & Inclusive Education

##### **6.3.4.1.1**

##### **6.3.4.1.2 Save the Children**

House 9, Road 16, Gulshan-1

Dhaka-1212, Bangladesh

Tel (880-2) 8814985/8814517 Ext. 306 or 305

Email:

### **APPENDIX 3 : BASIC PRINCIPLES PROMOTING EDUCATION FOR ALL**

- The inherent right of all children to a full cycle of primary education.
- The commitment to a child-centered concept of education in which individual differences are accepted as a source of richness and diversity, a challenge and not a problem.
- The improvement of the quality of primary education including improvements in professional training
- The provision of more flexible and responsive primary schooling, with respect to organization and management, process and content.
- Greater parental and community participation in education.
- Recognition of the wide diversity of needs and patterns of development of primary school children, demanding a wider and more flexible range of responses, and

Commitment to a developmental, inter-sectoral and holistic approach to education and care of primary school children.



#### **APPENDIX4: HIGHLIGHTS IE CONSULTATIVE MEETING/ WORKSHOP JULY, 2001**

Every child is different, with individual learning needs. Some children will require extra effort to ensure equitable access to, and equitable programming for quality education. These conditions are not static in a child's development.

Every child has the right to belong to mainstream society, benefit from mainstream development, and thus be part of mainstream education.

“Special needs” does not refer to impairments but also to other social conditions that may be marginalizing or contributing towards negative attitudes, stereotyping and discrimination (e.g., poverty; street – and working children; gender; ethnic / religious minorities).

Working definition developed for Bangladesh:

*“Inclusive education is an approach to improve the education system by limiting and removing barriers to learning, and acknowledging individual children's needs and potential. The goal of this approach is to make significant impact of the educational opportunities on those: 1) who attend school but who, for different reasons, do not achieve adequately; and those 2) who are not attending school, but who could attend if families, communities, schools and education systems were more responsive to their requirements.”*

## APPENDIX 5: INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS THAT CAN BE LINKED TO INCLUSIVE/RESPONSIVE QUALITY EFA

### 1. UN CRC (Ratified by GoB)

Art. 2: All children have the right to be protected from discrimination

Art. 12: All children have the right to be involved in and influence matters that affect them and adults need to listen to and *respect* children's views.

Art. 28: All children have equal rights and equal opportunities to education: *Primary education must be compulsory and free of charges.*

Art. 42/29: children, their parents and other adults have the right to learn about the UN CRC.

Art. 29: Education must be of good quality for all children:  
*Meaningful, participatory, child-friendly and responsive to diversity.*

### 2. EFA Conference Jomtien (1990) – Signed by GoB

There is a need for a broader, more inclusive understanding of special educational needs:

- Children who are currently enrolled in primary school, but for various reasons do not achieve adequately.
- Children who currently not enrolled in primary school, but who could be enrolled if schools were more welcoming and responsive.
- The relatively smaller group of children with more severe impairments who have special educational needs that are not being met.

NOTE : 80% of children with disabilities have mild/moderate impairments. These children can, with minor adjustments, be included in mainstream education if stereotyping and negative attitudes towards these children would change.

### 3. Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action – 1994

*“Regular schools that are inclusive are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover, such schools provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system.”* (Art. 2)

*“... Schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, emotional, social, linguistic or other conditions.”* (Art. 3)

#### **4. Dakar EFA Declaration (signed by GoB) – 2000**

Six Goals:

- 1) Expand early childhood care and education
- 2) Ensure free, compulsory primary education of good quality by 2015
- 3) Promote learning and life skills programs for young people and adults.
- 4) Expand adult literacy by 50% by 2015.
- 5) Eliminate gender disparities in access to education in primary and secondary education by 2005 and achieve gender equality by 2015
- 6) Enhance educational quality

All Governments (including GoB) pledged themselves to : “Create safe, healthy, inclusive and equitably resourced educational environments.....” (Article 8).

It also states:

“....in order to attract and retain children from marginalized and excluded groups, education systems should respond flexibly.... Education systems must be inclusive, actively seeking out children who are not enrolled, and responding flexibly to the circumstances and needs of all learners.” (Expanded commentary, Para 33).

“The key challenge is to ensure that the broad vision of Education for All as an inclusive concept is reflected in national government and agency funding policies .....” (Dakar Framework for Action, Para 19)

#### **5. E-9 Declaration – Recife (signed by GoB) – 2000**

One of the main goals: “.... Include all children with special needs in mainstream education.”

#### **6. South Asian Islamabad Declaration on EFA (2003)**

Responding to critical questions of:

- 1) The provision of free, inclusive, gender responsive quality basic education.
- 2) Special focus on Goal 5 (Dakar Declaration): Gender equality

## APPENDIX 6: NATIONAL COMMITMENTS THAT CAN BE LINKED TO INCLUSIVE/RESPONSIVE QUALITY EFA

### 1. Compulsory Primary Education Act (Bangladesh 1990)

Primary education is *compulsory* and *free of charge* for all children.

### 2. National Education Policy – 2000

In the process of REVISION

### 3. NPA II for EFA (2002-2015)

- Is based on the Bangladesh Constitution – its overall goal being that of *non-discrimination*.
- Being finalised.

### 4. Reference Reading: Concept-paper/Feasibility Study : Community-based Education Management Information System (EMIS) – 2003

*“It is the right of every child to have access to quality education, which is provided in an environment that is safe and child-friendly, while respecting and responding to differences in learning needs. This right can best be promoted and protected through the participation and empowerment of all stakeholders in educational planning and management, contributing to good governance in education at the local level.”*

### 5. NPA for Children II

*Children highlight the importance of QUALITY education for all children. They complain about unmotivated and unfriendly teachers, and the frequent use of physical and mental punishment/abuse in schools.*

### 6. PEDP II

*Focus on :*

- 1) *Organizational development and capacity building*
- 2) *Quality improvement I schools and classrooms*
- 3) *Quality improvement through infrastructure development*

## **APPENDIX 7 : CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS**

**Article 27** of the Constitutional declares that “all citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law.”

**Article 28** of the Constitutional provides that: (1) the state shall not discriminate against any citizen only on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth (2) women shall have equal rights with men in all spheres of the state and public life and (3) no citizen shall, only on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, be subjected to any disability, liability, restriction or condition with regard to access to any place of public entertainment or resort or admission to any educational institution.

**Article 31** specifically entitles a citizen to the right to protection by law. It states that “to enjoy protection by the law and to be treated in accordance with the law and only in accordance with the law, is the inalienable right of every citizen, wherever he may be, and every other person for the time being within Bangladesh, and in particular no action detrimental to the life, liberty, body, reputation or property of any person shall be taken except in accordance with law”.

## APPENDIX 8 : LEGAL ACTS AFFECTING STATUS OF CHILDREN IN BANGLADESH

Name of Act	Salient Features	Remarks
<b>Legal provisions related to Education</b>		
<b>Primary Education (compulsory) Act of 1991</b>	Education has been made compulsory for children aged 6 to 10 A separate Primary and Mass Education Division has been set Additional resources have been mobilized for primary education by both government and the NGOs	Coverage and quality remains poor a long way remains to be negotiated) The “compulsion” aspect has not as yet been well publicized, let alone implemented. Need to stringently implement the existing Bangladesh law against child marriage to promote the education of the girl child in particular.
<b>Legal provisions related to Protection of Children</b>		
<b>Children Act, 1974</b>	Protect children from abuse and neglect.	
<b>Child Labour The Children (pledging of labour) Act, 1933</b>	Provides for a penalty for a parent or guardian entering into an agreement to pledge the labour of child, and also for employing a child whose labour has been pledged.	
<b>The Employment of Children Act, 1938</b>	Regulates the employment of children in specified industries and occupations and provides for punishment of employers contravening the provisions of the Act.	
<b>The Shops and Establishment Act, 1965 The Factories Act, 1956</b>	Prohibits employment of children below 12 years of age in shops and commercial establishments. It regulates the hours of work for those below 18 years of age. Lays down regulations aimed at ensuring secure and healthy working conditions for a child or an adolescent. It also required rooms to be provided in the factory for the use of children under six whose mothers are employed there.	
<b>The Children’s Act, 1947 and Children Rules 1976</b>	Provides for the custody, protection and treatment of children, and trial and punishment of youthful offenders by juvenile courts. These also deal with the care and protection of destitute and neglected children. These provide, among other safeguards, for the punishment of special offences, such as cruelty to children, employment of children for begging and exploitation of children employees.	
<b>Legal provisions related to Child abuse</b>		
<b>The Women Children Repression (special provision) Act of 1995 and the Children Act, 1974</b>	Have adequate provisions against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children	The ground situation shows that an increasing number of children (particularly girls) are becoming victims of various forms of sexual exploitation and abuse, including prostitution and rape.:
<b>Legal provisions related to Right to privacy</b>		
<b>The Bangladesh Children Act, 1974</b>	Grants children the right to privacy	The constitution also grants children the right to privacy
<b>Legal provisions related to Girls and Women</b>		
<b>Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929 (1984 amendment)</b>	Provides punishment for a male adult marrying a child (below 16 years of age). Prescribes punishment for the parent or the guardian involved in a child marriage.	Has internal contradiction as though it prescribes punishment for parents or guardians of minors getting married, it does not declare such marriage as void.

<b>Name of Act</b>	<b>Salient Features</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
<b>The Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act, 1933</b>	Provides for punishment for forcing a girl under 18 year of age into prostitution. Abetting any one having custody or charge of the girl is also a crime.	This provision has now been incorporated in the Act VIII of 2000, which needs to be implemented with care
<b>The Cruelty to Women and Children (special provisions) Act, 1995</b>	Provides for severe punishment, including capital punishment, for rape, trafficking and kidnapping of children and for dowry related deaths.	This has now been repealed and replaced by Act VIII 2000, which needs to be implemented with care
<b>The maternity Benefit Act, 1939</b>	Regulates the employment of women for a certain period before and after childbirth and provides for the payment of maternity benefit to them by the employer.	
<b>The Maternity Benefit (Tea Estate) Act, 1950</b>	Prohibits the employment of women in tea gardens or processing factories for a certain period before and after childbirth and provides for the payment of maternity benefits for the period.	
<b>Legal provisions related to Children with disability</b>		
<b>Disability Article 23</b>	Defines a disabled child and enjoins state parties to recognize the right of a disabled child to enjoy a full and decent life in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance, and facilitate the child's active participation in the community	
<b>Legal provisions related to “Who is a Child?”</b>		
<b>The Bangladesh Majority Act of 1875</b>	Defines a person below the age of 18 years as a child.	
<b>The Guardians and Wards Act of 1890</b>	States that if a child is made a ward of court then he/she will remain a ward until the age of 21, thus defining him/her as a child up to that age.	
<b>The Children (pledging of labour) Act of 1933</b>	Regards a person below the age of 15 years as a child. The employment of Children Act of 1938 prohibits the employment of children below 12 years in regular jobs, except as apprentices. It has, however, provided for labour by children of 12 years of age and above by specifying certain jobs for children over 12 years but below 15 years of age and again certain jobs for children between 15 to 17 years.	
<b>The Bengal Vagrancy Act 1943</b>	Considers a person below the age of 14 years as a child.	
<b>The Factories Act of 1965</b>	Defines a child as a person who has not completed 16 years of age. It prohibits employment of children below the age of 14 years in any factory.	
<b>The Children Act of 1974.</b>	States that a child is a person below the age of 16 years	
<b>Legal provisions related to Birth Registration</b>		
<b>The Birth Registration Action of 1886,.</b>	Requires all births to be registered	
<b>Legal provisions related to Health and Nutrition</b>		
<b>Health and Nutrition Article 24(3)</b>	Requires the state to take all effective and appropriate measures with a view to abolishing traditional practices prejudicial to the health of children, even if this involves a diminution of the concept of cultural rights.	

## APPENDIX 9 : LIFE CHAINED TO AGONY

Sixteen-year-old beautiful Parul is chained for about a year.

Neighbours and villagers call her 'pagli' (mad).

Her poor day labourer father Abdus Samad says he has no money for her treatment.

This correspondence along with some newsmen visited her at Baruihati-Rasulpur village in Bagmara upazila recently and came to know the tragic tale behind her present condition.

Poor Abdus Samad is the only bread earner for his family with five sons and daughters. They are having very hard days.

One day, in early 1998, a wealthy man in the village proposed Samad that Parul could work at his house as a maid. Samad readily accepted as his Parul would be well-fed and also earn some money. "The offer of three meals a day for Parul and money in the month-end came to us as a blessing at the time", Samad said wiping tears.

Parul was also happy at her master's house and so was the houseowner.

But within a few days, the eyes of the house owner's son Sayem fell on her. The young man succeeded to seduce her, promising marriage.

"My daughter loved him seriously, but he deceived her", Samad claimed. She became pregnant. She started pressing Sayem for marriage. One day, he took her to Attrai in Naogaon in the name of court marriage and forced her to undergo abortion.

Returning home, Parul informed the matter to the Sayem's parents. They drove her out the next day and she returned to her parents.

A number of arbitration meetings were held at the village but nothing went in her favour as Sayem's family was influential, Samad said.

Parul's mother Raheda went to the local police station to file a case, but police declined to record any case.

She then filed a rap case against Sayem with a Magistrate Court in Rajshahi on May 6, 1999.

The local police station, allegedly at the influence of Sayem's family, submitted a final report and the case was dismissed. Deceived and not getting justice, Parul became mentally retarded.

Samad sold the only land and arranged her treatment at Pabna Mental Hospital.

She returned home cured after six months.

Following her recovery, she was married to one Saidul Islam of Shingara village in Attai upzilla.

But Parul was fate obsessed.

Her husband and his family started torturing her physically for dowry.

One day, after a severe beating, she started talking irrelevant. This mounted the torture. She became mentally retarded again. Her in-laws kept her at her father's house about a year ago.

Now Samad has nothing to sell for her treatment.

During the visit on September 15, she was found chained with a tree in the backyard of the house. At night she is brought to the thatched house and kept chained, her parents said.

"What else I can do?" Samad said. Her brother Rahidul said, earlier, whenever freed, she used to run towards Sayem's house.

"Sayem loves me, take me to him," Abul Kalam, a villager quoted her as saying once.

Officials at Bagmara thana said the policemen who were there one year ago have been transferred and they can not say anything about the matter. At Sayem's house, none was found to comment on the matter.



## **APPENDIX 10 : STRATEGIES FOR IDENTIFYING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITY**

1. Survey is to be made to ascertain the exact number of disabled children and identify the type and degree of disability in Bangladesh.
2. Integrated education system has to be introduced for the disabled in selected schools. The disabled children develop fast if they are allowed to receive education with normal children.
3. It is necessary to develop the 64 schools under the Social Welfare Directorate where integrated education program for the blind is in operation. This system can be introduced for the deaf and the dumb as well as for the mentally and physically handicapped people.
4. Integrated education program has to be introduced in primary schools at district and thana levels for the deaf and blind and mentally and physically handicapped people.
5. It is necessary to develop the existing Government and non-government primary schools for the disabled immediately.
6. It is necessary to set up schools for special education according to the degree of disability of the handicapped.
7. Training college / institute has to be set up for teachers of schools for the disabled.
8. In order to create knowledge and awareness about disability, subjects related to the disability should be included in the curriculum from the primary age of education.
9. Alternative curriculum has to be followed for those disabled students who are unable to study one or more subjects due to disability.
10. Equal opportunity for services has to be ensured for disabled people. They deserve some special consideration.
11. Arrangements have to be made to supply necessary education materials for the disabled learners free of cost or at a low price.
12. In order to introduce the proposed coordinated education in general schools, special education and subject relating to disability should be included in the curriculum of Teacher's Training College. This will make it easier for teachers to teach disabled learners in the general classes.
13. At least one teacher of special education has to be appointed in the schools under the purview of an integrated education program.